

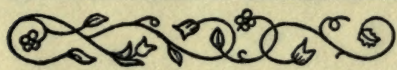




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# The Perils of Peace

BY

CECIL CHESTERTON

Introduction by HILAIRE BELLOC

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**This book shows conclusively that any peace which leaves the present German Empire in existence with its centre in Berlin would be a mere truce.**



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# THE PERILS OF PEACE

BY

CECIL CHESTERTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
HILAIRE BELLOC

LONDON

T. WERNER LAURIE, LTD.

8 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

DEDICATED

TO

MY FRIEND AND CONFRÈRE

FRANCIS YVON ECCLES.

*Que tout s'arme contre eux, contre eux que tout conspire  
Que, quels que soient le chef, la route et les moyens,  
La France et les Français n'aient qu'un seul but : détruire  
La Prusse et les Prussiens !*

*PAUL DÉROULEDE,  
Chants du Soldat.*



## DEDICATORY LETTER

MY DEAR ECCLES,—You and I have long agreed that such a book as this needed to be written. Had you written it, it would have been a much better book; though—if you will pardon an esoteric allusion—it would probably have taken longer to write, even with locked doors. However, as you would not write it, I had to do so, and I dedicate it to you, not only in gratitude and admiration, but also as a sort of incarnation of the Great Alliance in which we both believed, I think, before we had seen it, and in which we both now see the only hope for the deliverance of Europe.

In the same spirit I append to this volume a verse which I came across the other day in the works of a poet to whom you introduced me—a poet, and something more than a poet, a prophet. He was a man who saw through forty years of apparently hopeless defeat what it was that Europe had to destroy; and who, by a very tragic irony, died on the very eve of the war which, unless we are fools or cowards, will end in the fulfilment of his vision. It is an additional

## 6 DEDICATORY LETTER

motive with me that dedicating this book to you, I feel that I am dedicating it to the spirit of Paul Déroulède.

In revising the proofs of this book I realise how fast events are moving. The return of Russia, which even when I wrote was as obvious to me as it must, one would think, have been obvious to everybody except Mr George, is already an accomplished fact. The offensive in the West, which I speak of as a future event, is already in progress. It would be unwise to prophesy concerning these matters. Before my book is out the military situation may have changed for the worse or for the better. But it is important to emphasise the fact that the peril of which I write in this book is one which increases instead of diminishes with the improved prospects of victory. The greater the measure of our apparent success, the larger the concessions which the enemy will be disposed to make, and the more dangerous the possible effect of such concessions upon uninstructed opinion.

For, as you and I realise, in dealing with the thing called Prussia, the acceptance of any concession short of unconditional surrender, is an act of suicide.

I am, my dear Eccles, yours very sincerely,

CECIL CHESTERTON.

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## PREFACE

BY HILAIRE BELLOC

MR CHESTERTON'S book is an attempt to accomplish a very difficult task. It is a task which, perhaps, I think more difficult than he does, and it is a task comparable in nature to more than one that he has lately undertaken in public affairs.

To put it in the most general terms, it is the task of making what was an aristocracy and is now a plutocracy act like a democracy.

But in the present case—the matter of the war and its peace—the need is so urgent, and the punishment threatening ignorance, corruption, or a bad political machinery, so evident and so tremendous, that he has a better chance of accomplishing his object than heretofore.

Let me give an example that will show both the difficulty and the nature of such a task.

Mr Chesterton and I worked side by

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side for months in making public the nature of Parliamentary decline.

After a general exposure in book and newspaper, we proceeded to a particular case in proof—the Marconi business.

It was only one out of dozens of such things which are native to the atmosphere of Westminster, but it was an excellent working model with which to move our contemporaries.

Mr Chesterton put it forth most clearly and fully. Of course all that could be concealed by the culprits was concealed—and still is; but the Marconi ramp was made an object lesson so reiterated and so insisted upon that nobody could ignore it. After several months of this prolonged action even the official “Conservative” Press was compelled to discuss the misdeeds of the “Liberals.” In something like a year all the middle classes and great sections even of the populace had at last appreciated—though imperfectly—what the governing classes had known all along: that bribery was a commonplace in public life, and that the professional politicians gave themselves and their relatives



sums of money obtained, directly and indirectly, by monopolies, special contracts, etc., out of the public pocket. I say, so far as plain statement and proof were concerned, all were at last convinced.

What was the result?

Under the old aristocratic conditions, which had been the strength of Protestant England since the fall of the monarchy in the seventeenth century, the Marconi men would have been done for. Not that aristocracies are other than cynical, but that their power depends upon a certain prestige, and members of their oligarchy discovered and exposed in an undignified moral position are thrust out of that oligarchy for the sake of its own preservation.

Under a democracy the culprits would have been punished; for under a democracy public men are regarded not as masters but as servants. Dishonesty upon their part, though more frequently attempted perhaps than under other forms of Government, is checked before it grows dangerous by the simple process of attaching unpleasant consequences to corrup-

tion. At best the culprits are imprisoned (like Garfunkel) or driven to suicide (like Reinach) or they fly the country (like Hertz). At the least they suffer general contempt. Honest men refuse to associate with the tricksters. They have to hide and retire.

But under our present regime of plutocracy neither of these two salutary processes of excretion, the aristocratic or the democratic, were at work. The Marconi men remained in public life, and not only so remained, but were regarded by their colleagues as peculiarly suitable to further and graver responsibilities as a consolation for their recent sad experience.

Why was this? It was due to effects of plutocracy working quite openly and patent to the observation of all: the first an indifference to right and wrong—the chief moral consequence of plutocracy; the second the direct power of great wealth in a plutocracy to govern to its own advantage—its chief material effect.

As to the first, men told you upon every side that it was quixotic and fanatical to set up an impossible standard of purity in

public life; that there was no great harm in such things; that a fellow caught in some rather dirty action was probably fairly cunning or he would not have engaged in it, and that cunning was the chief requisite in an administrator and his greatest claim to our reverence. Of wisdom in contrast with cunning, of the fact that cunning is the opposite and corrosive of wisdom, as sloth and luxury are the opposites and the corrosives of good breeding, opinion in general had become oblivious.

As to the second, it was simply a question of mechanism. There was no organ of expression that was not owned by the same plutocratic forces as had, in another aspect, worked the Marconi business. All the principal newspapers—almost in proportion to their circulation—first falsified and then hushed up the issue. A peerage was given to one newspaper vulgarian (the second Harmsworth); a few other honours and salaries to the lesser ones, and the thing was over.

How does all this apply to the present crisis?



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In the following manner :

The country is at the present moment under the acute, imperative necessity of destroying Prussia. Its only impediment in the full accomplishment of this salutary execution is the power of a few rich men. If this country is persuaded to lag behind its Allies in the hard task of victory, if it does not (1) fully support all its Allies up to the complete defeat of the enemy, (2) use that defeat fully and help its Allies whole-heartedly to eliminate the criminal power, then the future of Britain—whatever be that of her Allies—is beyond doubt. She will remain for long a great, somewhat amorphous commercial power, bound together by the interests of her merchants and financiers, but increasingly lacking in co-ordination and losing wealth. As a spiritual and political force in the world she will decline very rapidly indeed.

Britain is clearly at once the chief objective against which a surviving Prussian State would direct itself, and, from her dependence upon the sea, Britain is also the most vulnerable objective offered to

such a foe. Her dependence upon the sea makes her the most vulnerable objective because any one power commanding the sea excites the jealousy of all others, and because sea power depends in a great degree upon mechanical and limited things. A determined enemy with great material resources can far more easily and quickly build a great fleet than he can re-create a dominant army after defeat. Further, certain changes in marine attack and defence due to quite modern invention make security at sea much more gravely threatened by a much less expenditure of money than ever before.

Now the organism of a nation thus politically threatened is, perhaps, better defended by an aristocracy than by any other form of government. An aristocracy is vividly alive to the national interests, and is prompt, ruthless, and exhaustive in the pursuit of them.

The old aristocratic England (which perished in our own time and before our own eyes) would have fallen upon this problem with the rapidity and directness of lightning. Its governing members

would not only have expended all their energy against the foe, but would have seized the first moments of the struggle for the development of the fullest possible policy of aggression. Finally, it would have had no sort of hesitation about the end in view. It would have gone straight for the total destruction of the adverse power menacing the State.

We may call such a spirit unscrupulous and even vicious if we disagree with it. But we cannot deny that it would have been the most efficient spiritual force for achieving the end—the salvation of the country.

A democracy would in another fashion have been equally determined and direct, though perhaps less prompt, and certainly less informed. It would have worked more by instinct. It would probably have made initial mistakes. But it would have attempted to correct them by its later energy, and above all it would have no doubt whatever of the prime necessity to-day. Everyone among the people is to-day agreed. The speech of all in the street and in the crowds is the same. Those

who with the terrible necessities of the moment, who divert themselves with "Pacifist" theories or who continue, in the academic classes, the old rubbish of "Teutonism," are numerically quite insignificant and utterly out of tune with masses around them.

The danger lies in the fact that what really governs us is plutocratic, and that the aristocracy is gone and the populace impotent to act—not even conceiving their action possible, but ready to submit to anything the rich impose.

There are three separate ways in which this danger of a false policy proceeding from the new plutocracy has manifested itself.

First, it has been clearly seen that private interests in trade—the advantages of private fortunes—have been allowed to weigh, if not against the commonwealth, at any rate on a par with the interests of the commonwealth. We have seen it in the handling of freights; we have seen it in the exceptions to blockade; we have seen it in the field of contracts. But this evil is particularly apparent in the hesita-



tion shown by many when they discuss the commercial terms to be imposed upon the enemy, and their fear lest a complete victory should interfere with private gain in commerce.

From the point of view of the nation as a whole, a victorious people has no economic advantage whatsoever in leaving the vanquished wealthy. There is every advantage in leaving the vanquished laborious and *productive* of wealth; but the whole effort of the victor should be turned to the draining of that wealth, once produced, *away* from the vanquished and *towards* themselves.

Thus to exclude the goods of a conquered Germany from these islands is the act of an idiot. To permit a conquered Germany to build up new wealth wherewith to attack again is the act of a traitor. Yet these two policies alone are suggested by the stupid and the more intelligent sections of our plutocracy irrespectively.

There is but one obvious public policy—the maintenance of a continual drain of wealth from a Germany conquered and compelled to export to our advantage. It

is a policy the richer can impose most simply by life-long indemnity, most drastically by the confiscation of mortgage and scrip with garrisons to maintain the treaty.

Private interests are at issue with such a public policy. The financier has interests bound up with German interests; the merchant fears the ruin of his client.

There is here a very interesting example of private fortune misunderstanding its own advantage from its very avarice.

The financial interests—which are by far the strongest things in this country—thoroughly understand the taking of tribute from the occupied and subject territory of those whom they think very weak.

The whole history of Ireland is nothing else than that. Ireland, until George Wyndham's Land Act (and to some extent even since that Act), was sending overseas masses of material, vast in proportion to her wealth, as interest upon loans, which loans had been advanced to the landlord class by cosmopolitan finance.

The whole history of modern Egypt is

nothing else. What the Egyptian peasant produces beyond his bare livelihood and the cost of administration is paid as interest to their same cosmopolitan financiers, who caught in their net long ago the foolish and irresponsible monarch of the country.

It is perfectly clear that the economic fate of any conquered country could be modelled upon the same lines. You can always so arrange matters that the vanquished have to *produce* wealth indeed, but, instead of *retaining* that wealth, shall regularly pass it over to the victors. If those members of our plutocracy who happen to have no personal interests in Germany or Austria could be got to see this almost self-evident economic proposition, the power of their great fortunes would no longer be an impediment to the complete destruction of the enemy.

But they cannot be got to see it. Even those wealthy men who have no interests in the enemy's country will almost certainly work to prevent the terms of peace from impoverishing the enemy.

Meanwhile those who *have* personal in-

terests in the enemy territory (and these are very numerous) will be directly interested in preventing a complete victory; they are working actively against it at this moment. That is the first way in which the fact the new plutocracy imperils the final success of the national arms.

The second way in which the danger manifests itself is through the preference of private fortune to public good in the matter of direct military expense.

The great war has cost the belligerents in material goods per month far more than the material goods which they can themselves produce or economically command as interest or tribute from abroad; at least, it has cost them an expense of material goods at a far higher rate than the rate at which wealth can be produced or demanded over and above the current necessities of national sustenance.

Therefore the great belligerent nations have had to fall back upon their accumulated reserve of wealth to withdraw it from the production of further wealth: to consume it immediately and irrevocably upon the field of battle.



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In part this accumulation has been directly expended in the prosecution of the war. In part it has been exchanged for material obtained from neutral countries. For instance, the getting rid of American shares held in Britain simply means that whereas a resident of Britain formerly owned, say a group of buildings in America, and received the rent thereof in England, he has now been compelled to forgo this rent for ever in exchange for a number of shells the Americans have made for him; which shells produce no further wealth in consumption, and therefore, when consumed, leave nothing in their place. The British revenue drawn from America has disappeared. It has disappeared in those little puffs of white against the grey of the Flanders sky.

Now the accumulation of capital during the long peace of the West was so enormous that the first two years of this great struggle could be "financed"—that is, in plain English, the coal, the chemicals, the cloth and the iron and wheat, etc., could be obtained—without any form of true confiscation. The possessors of these

accumulations were for two years willing to give them up on condition that the State promised them a certain yearly revenue in their place—which revenue it could probably raise. But this process after about two years of war is reaching its term. The great accumulation of material still remaining available will hardly be obtained in this voluntary fashion. The State may try to obtain it by promising greater future rewards than it is ever likely to be able to pay—but such inability will be patent to those who are approached for a loan.

Therefore, if the war should proceed beyond a certain period—I have suggested some time in the third year as the probable beginning of the new phase—owners of great wealth would be faced, not merely with severe taxation upon their current revenue for short time, but with an actual diminution of their permanent revenues throughout all the future. They would be faced with the beginning of a confiscation from private stock for the public weal. To fight against this by quite obvious and direct means, the masters of our plutoc-

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racy might not dare. But to fight against it by indirect means, they would; and the most obvious indirect means would be to spread the conception abroad that further struggle had become "impossible" on account of some mysterious thing called "financial exhaustion."

In plain economics it would only mean, of course, that the price of victory was the reduction of fortune. But plain economics are always presented nowadays as a mystery beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. It would be easy to flood the public with the technicalities of the money market; to ascribe to this "financial exhaustion" a rise in the prices of food, or any other evil of which the populace as a whole was acutely conscious. And the very men to do it are the men of the Marconi ramp, the Indian balances and the Rupee scandal—all of them actively in power.

Such is the second form of the peril: the second way in which the fact that we are a plutocracy may interfere with the achievement of victory.

But it may be asked by what instrument

the plutocracy could act thus rapidly to pervert opinions in a matter so vital and so clear?

This question leads me to the *third* way in which the peril of it appears; and that is through the plutocratic control of the Press.

The people of our great towns—that is, between four-fifths and nine-tenths of our population—have no information save through the Press. The things they care for and discuss are not real experiences, but phantasms presented to them by the Press.

Now the Press means to-day in England a very small number of very wealthy men, and on the patriotism and the public spirit of those very few wealthy men depends the true information of the people: upon their baseness, ignorance, folly, avarice, or cowardice—or all five combined—depends the mal-information of the populace. By mal-information we may suffer (we are already beginning to suffer) the weakening of the national will, and the failure to insist upon national success.

This handful of rich newspaper-owners



is, like all other categories of men, diverse in character ; and we find some portion of the Press resolved on victory and refusing to spread panic, although the resolution bids fair to impoverish its owners. But you will find another portion, from whatever of the five motives I have enumerated (and usually from all five combined), playing the traitor.

It will probably be the very newspapers which were most vulgarly violent against weak opponents in the past, which have shown the most offensive lack of chivalry in military matters, which have shrieked the loudest while opinion was still violent and tenacious in the earlier phases of the present great war, that will try to create towards the end of it a current of opinion leading towards an inconclusive peace.

That is the third way in which a plutocratic form of Government can manifest itself, and it is far the most effective of the several ways in which that form may ruin England, and of those individuals most dangerous, through a lack of education combined with avarice and fear, I

should name Alfred Harmsworth as the most obvious type.

Such then are the dangers besetting the full achievement of victory as I see them in the Society to which we belong. Against them we must set the fact that the marvellous effort the country as a whole has made, and made spontaneously, is a guarantee of something very different in the commonwealth, a resurrection of forces at which the plutocracy under which we had begun to live hardly guessed.

It is possible—it is to be prayed for most earnestly—that these new popular forces will, handicapped though they are by the profound popular ignorance of public men and public affairs, prove too strong for any anti-national conspiracy. It is to these popular forces that such a book as this principally appeals. Not so long ago the appeal to aristocracy might have had its force—but to-day that factor is quite dead. The aristocrats are dining with the Samuels and sneering at their hosts.

I may add in conclusion that Mr Chesterton's book is largely directed to argument against those in whose singular

philosophy justice does not demand the punishment of any powerful criminal nor common sense the rendering of a wicked maniac impotent for further evil.

It seems to me personally (I give it only as a private opinion) that Mr Chesterton has here somewhat exaggerated the importance of a clique with which we are brought so directly into contact whenever we engage in political discussion that we may over-estimate its real strength. I mean the intellectuals.

The fool who says "all war is wrong"—(a perfectly meaningless phrase, as who should say, "all hammering is right whether on the head of my aunt or of a tenpenny nail"), and the more perverted fool who cannot reconcile justice with charity (for he has no creed), has indeed an influence in our society quite out of proportion to his numbers. That is because he is to be discovered almost exclusively in the wealthier classes. His subscriptions to secret political "pools" and to the private necessities of individual politicians give him considerable power; while, in the absence of a common religion,

he has a field for action upon some portion of the public mind. He still has an influence. But I do think that this element can no longer be regarded as a chief factor in the situation.

The suffering has been so great, the heroism so simple and so sublime, the sacrifice so spontaneous and so superb that these mere negative follies of the Garden Cities and the Universities—and a small minority even of these—can hardly deflect opinion or control policy.

No, the danger does not lie there. It lies in the presence at the head of affairs of the low-born men who for years defied opinion while they took bribes from shady company-promoters and their families, while they rifled the silver interests and the taxation-balances of India, while they robbed ignorant investors—as in the Howard Union attempt or in American Marconis—while they still more cynically affirmed—what was, alas ! true—that their colleagues, the political lawyers in the Courts, so far from punishing *them* would condemn any public-spirited critic to fine or imprisonment.



It lies in the presence behind such scum in office (and now actually upon the bench) of newspaper-owners—men of similar origin, similar morals, similar immunity from the law, and yet masters of our public life.

Long before the war these things had become a common jest against us throughout Europe. We were bid neglect the foreign critics—our shame was only a moral, an intangible weakness. We were told to ignore such flimsy stuff as honour.

To-day the awful issue proves that Mr Chesterton and I were right, and that our shallow and timorous advisers of but four years ago were desperately, tragically wrong.

If the country fails at the end and patches a peace the crime will proceed from just such secret powers as gave us Marconi, and the weakness and the folly will lie at the door of just those professional politicians who permitted what followed and obeyed their private masters.

There is no logical connection between swindling and inefficiency, but there is an organic connection. God is not mocked.

# PART I

## PRUSSIA'S CONSOLATION STAKES



# THE PERILS OF PEACE



## WHAT PRUSSIA IS

It was not till some time after the outbreak of the present war that it began to become clear to most Englishmen of what nature was the Thing which they had to fight and kill. We had indeed been warned that a conflict was inevitable by many and very various witnesses—by soldiers like Lord Roberts, by publicists like Mr Blatchford and Mr Hyndman, by men acquainted with the general European situation like Dr Sarolea, by personal observers of the German attitude and the German preparations like Mr Bart Kennedy. But though such men could foresee the conflict and warn us (with all too



little effect) to be prepared for it, they could not perhaps wholly foresee, at any rate they could not bring home to us the character which that conflict would assume; and in consequence, when war was at last forced upon us, the revelation of that character came upon most Englishmen as a very disagreeable surprise.

Up to that point we had had little or no hatred towards the Germans; our bias was rather the other way. The Germans had been our Allies in the past, and we had even persuaded ourselves, by the help of our professors and theirs, that they were our kinsfolk—so that in praising them we could in a subtler fashion praise ourselves. And indeed the praise of Germany and of German things was almost a note of nineteenth-century literature in England, and was supported by some of its greatest names. Coleridge had taken up and introduced here the obscure and rather shadowy philosophy which had arisen in North Germany as an antidote to the lucid moral dogmas of the French Revolution, from which he had apostatised. Carlyle had praised the virility and manly sim-

plicity of the German; Matthew Arnold (though in him the sentiment was partly balanced by his love of the Latin culture) his devotion to *Geist*. Picturesque imaginative writers like Kingsley had distorted all history in order to present the strong limbed, clean living, truth telling "Teuton" as a sort of predestined redeemer. On the top of all this came the sensational military victory of 1870, which seemed to justify it all. From that time arose a new legend, that of the marvellous "efficiency" of the Germans, which it was our duty in all respects to imitate.

It is true that during the last ten years or so a change had taken place in our purely political attitude towards the German Empire. The open challenge to our naval supremacy—on which our very life as a nation depends—the avowed programme of Colonial expansion at our expense, together with the arrogance with which Germany under Prussian leadership appeared to take for granted her right to a hegemony of Europe, made us more and more conscious of a direct affront to our just influence, and even our in-

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dependence, and induced us to effect a settlement of various long-standing quarrels with France, and to lean more and more to the Franco-Russian side in the European balance.

But all this involved no personal hostility to Germany. We still rather liked and even more decidedly respected the Germans. When at last war came, though we had no difficulty in recognising the Prussian Government as the aggressor, though we were prepared to stand honourably by our engagement in resisting such aggression, and though our moral sense was shocked by the cynical repudiation of public faith involved in the invasion of Belgium, we were still inclined to attribute these things to this or that individual, and to regard the mass of Germans with indulgence. They were good enough fellows, misled by the wicked Kaiser.

Much water and much blood has flowed under the bridges since then, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that the flowing of blood is any more responsible than the flowing of water for the change which has come over our outlook. Eng-

lishmen and Germans might have decimated each other's ranks for ten years on end in fair and decent fighting without producing any effect save some passing moods of anger which might have been followed as has frequently been the case in such contests between Europe's peoples, by enduring goodwill. What has changed us has simply been the revelation, forced upon us by the facts in spite of our incredulity, that the German of to-day is in action not only a barbarian but a diabolist.

It is to be observed that this discovery came as a surprise to us English, and to us almost alone in Europe. It was no surprise whatever to the French or the Poles or the Danes or, in fact, to any of those who had had direct experience of what the Prussian is and of what all those who submit to his control soon become. It was no surprise to Europe as a whole, for in Europe as a whole the character of Prussia is pretty well appreciated. Even in Ireland, where in 1798 we had used the North German soldier to do the filthier part of the work of repression from which



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English soldiers shrank, there was much less surprise than in this country.

When the first stories came of the abominations which the Germans were committing in Belgium, as a sequel to their treacherous violation of Belgian independence, a very considerable section, at least of English opinion, was disposed to a large measure of incredulity. Nor was that incredulity wholly without excuse. It could be urged with perfect justice that in all wars charges of inhumanity and of violation of the laws of war are frequently made on both sides. In certain matters—notably in regard to alleged abuse of flags of truce or disregard of the Red Cross—we know that such charges are often honestly made and as honestly denied. Some of the stories that reached us concerning the behaviour of the Germans could hardly be brought under such a head; but they might be exaggerated, or they might be isolated and untypical incidents. Then came the wholesale flight of the civil population of Belgium before the invader; a thing unprecedented in Europe since the Dark Ages, and plainly pointing to an extreme of ter-

rorism altogether beyond the necessities of the most rigorous military occupation. We had also the official text of the German proclamations and army orders—direct and unscrupulous appeals to fear. Yet there were still some who doubted; nor were their doubts set altogether at rest until a full judicial inquiry, sifting the evidence with extreme care and rejecting all that was not capable of absolute demonstration, had revealed a picture which seemed to belong, not to civilisation, not even to barbarism, but quite strictly to hell. Then at last we learnt that the wildest stories we had heard, true or untrue, were but approximations to the unspeakable reality. Then at last we were to begin to know the Prussian as he is.

We were to learn more. The German navy, unable to confront ours in fair fight upon the high seas, was to rival the German army in atrocities committed against non-combatants. Our women and children were to be murdered; our unfortified towns shelled. An Englishwoman, who had devoted herself to the care of our wounded and of the enemy's own, was to be foully

put to death. Perhaps we are not at the end of our instruction. It may well be that before this war is over, Prussia's last throw may bring the murders, rapings, torturings, and the like into our own English meadows. But, even without such final proof, we are beginning to understand what Europe in general has already fully realised, what sort of power it is that has constituted itself leader of the assault upon Christendom.

For that Prussian power is like nothing else that Europe has ever seen. The sheer devilry which has appalled us in this war is at once the reflection and the outcome of a deeper devilry which has ever lain at the root of her policy, at least ever since her real founder, Frederick the Great, set out to prove that a State founded upon speculative and practical atheism—that is upon the denial of the whole conception of right, divine or human—could be made stronger than Christendom, and could maintain and aggrandise itself in defiance of the moral traditions of all Europe.

What manner of man Frederick was, with what material he had to deal, why

Europe was so slow and so little successful in making any stand against his outrages and those of the heirs of his tradition—these are matters which I have fully discussed elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and I shall not attempt here to recapitulate an argument now reinforced and confirmed by the daily record of things too terrible and too close to us to admit of sophistical explanations.

Nor shall I repeat at length what I have already written—and what events have even more signally justified—as to the character and effect of the Prussian system—the hideous perversion it produces in those who submit to it, the cruelties which it inevitably involves towards those whom the Prussian would rule against their will. There are, however, certain particular conclusions to be drawn from the general survey of Prussia's record which it is necessary for the purpose of this book to emphasise in more particular fashion.

The first is that the character of Prussian policy is a fixed character; it does not and will not change with changes of for-

<sup>1</sup> "The Prussian hath said in his Heart," Chapman & Hall, 2s. net,



tune. It does not depend upon a particular man, or even upon a particular dynasty. It depends upon a creed with which every true Prussian has been inoculated from childhood, and which has bitten deep into the soul of the people. The conversion of the Prussians to anything resembling Christian or even civilised European morals is a rather less probable event than the conversion of the Spaniards to Primitive Methodism. So long as Prussia is suffered to exist, however the war may end, the policy of Prussia will remain the same, though, of course, the opportunities of giving effect to it in this or that connection may vary.

The second point—and this has been to many the chief revelation of the war—is that whatever Prussia can control becomes in effect and action Prussian. In the early days of the present conflict there were not a few who hoped that a distinction might be made between the rulers of Germany and the mass of Germans, between Prussia and the rest of the German Empire, at any rate between Prussia and her Allies. But it has been found in practice utterly im-

possible to make such distinctions so long as Prussia remains established as the military centre of the alliance against European civilisation. Whether we take the case of the German Socialists, on whose humanitarian and "internationalist" proclivities so many hopes were built by those who had no personal knowledge of them, or of the minor German States, which have been caught in the Prussian net, or the Allies whom Prussia has been able to bully or bribe into espousing her cause, we find the same thing indisputable about them all. Whatever fine distinctions we may seek to make between these various subjects and vassals of Prussia, the solid fact stands out that in action one and all accept their subjection and vassalage, and carry out faithfully the will of their masters.

This also will endure if the Prussian power endures among the Germans. So long as Prussia remains the first power in Germany, even if she ceases to be the first power in Europe, the Germans will continue to obey her will. She will still remain, even after defeat, what she was

before the war, the soul of a potential if not of an actual coalition against European civilisation.

Her ambitions will have been postponed, not abandoned. Her creed will remain. She cannot abandon it without abandoning her own existence, for she exists only as its creature and representative. So long as she lives she will live by those dogmas with which we are now at war, the dogmas of racial superiority overriding all liberty and nationality, and of predestined conquest overriding all law and morals. Nor can she tolerate the setting of any permanent limits to the extension of her rule, for it is the first article of Prussianism, upon which all the others hang, that such rule is destined to illimitable and inevitable extension.

If we allow her to live, if, above all, we allow her to remain the rallying centre of the Germanic peoples, she will admit the limitation of her ambitions only so far as the facts compel her. She will admit them only for a time. She will replenish and recuperate her strength. She will re-arm. She will intrigue and bribe with the object

of securing new supporters and disarming old enemies. And she will then seek to recover as much as possible of what she has lost by some treacherous stroke against such rival as she thinks she can most easily and completely isolate.

And there is no shadow of doubt as to the name of the rival against whom such a blow is already planned as the first effort to be made after the war.

It is England.



## II

### WHAT PRUSSIA ATTEMPTED

IN order to enforce clearly the conclusion set out above, it is necessary to examine in a somewhat more definite fashion the origins of the present war.

In general terms it is not necessary to argue the matter very elaborately. The war was an act of aggression undertaken by the Germanic powers against their neighbours. The original inspiration of that aggression is to be found in the fundamental Prussian doctrine that the strong have always the right to invade the privileges of those whom they suppose to be weaker than themselves; and its sustenance is to be found in the conviction, carefully instilled into all the populations of the Germanies, and at last accepted by them as a self-evident proposition, that the

German is the natural superior of all other European peoples, is inevitably stronger than they, and has, in consequence (according to the Prussian theory), the right to deal with them as he chooses. That is the fundamental thesis which is now being debated, not with words, but with bullets and shells along the two great lines between the North Sea and the mountains of Switzerland, and between the Baltic and the frontiers of Roumania.

In consonance with this thesis Prussia resolved to assert once and for all her ascendancy over Europe, and ultimately over the whole world, by force of arms. That is, broadly speaking, the meaning of the present war.

But in order to make it plain why Europe and this country in particular cannot afford to leave Prussia in existence at the end of this war it is necessary to go into these things in a little more detail, and to emphasise certain particular aspects of the Prussian project.

Firstly, the assault upon European civilisation was planned in advance by at least two years. Long before such a date Prussia

had contemplated the ultimate subjection of all Europe to her own vassalage and to her own peculiar code of morals. But one may fix the period of two years as the period during which the project was not only contemplated, but dated for a particular hour. Since 1912, at least, the date of the proposed assault upon European civilisation was fixed for the year 1914 after the gathering in of the harvest.

There are a dozen pieces of evidence which make this conclusion certain. The French, whose excellent system of counter-spying (though somewhat disorganised by the activities of Cosmopolitan Finance in the Dreyfus case) has given them a protection against German espionage which we lack, have published in their Yellow Book many documents enforcing this point. But really it needs no enforcing for those who have studied the course of European diplomacy during the period named. It was after the Balkan War, and more especially after the partial defeat of German diplomacy by the union of France and England in the matter of Agadir, that the Prussian Government be-

gan to make its preparations for an act of aggression against its neighbours. It proposed to be ready by August, 1914; and it was ready by exactly that date.

It was during this period that the German Empire under Prussian guidance made the first real attempt to put something like a complement of its available citizens under arms. It was during this period that the Zeppelins were developed, and the submarines. But especially it was during this period that a deliberate attempt was made to separate Great Britain from her natural Allies, to keep her neutral in the projected conflict, in order that she might be reserved for subsequent and separate destruction when the hegemony of Europe should have been secured. The Prussian Government tried hard to achieve that end, thought she had achieved it, and in fact missed it so narrowly that in view of what has happened since no instructed Englishman can easily help shuddering at the closeness of his escape.

In the year 1912, as we all know, Lord Haldane visited Germany, and it was generally understood that the object of his



mission was the establishment of more friendly relations between the two countries. With the wisdom, or otherwise, of dispatching such a mission, or of selecting Lord Haldane to take charge of it, we are not at the moment concerned. What concerns us is the light thrown upon Prussian aims and Prussian methods by his reception.

The Prussian Government drew up and communicated to Lord Haldane a memorandum setting out the conditions which it considered necessary to the conclusion of a good understanding with Great Britain. This document is so important that I quote it at length :

- (1) The high contracting parties assure each other mutually of their desire of peace and friendship.
- (2) They will not, either of them, make or prepare to make any (unprovoked) attack upon the other, or join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression, or become party to any plan or naval or military enterprise alone or in com-

bination with any other Power directed to such an end, and declare themselves not to be bound by any such engagement.

- (3) If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more Powers in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other party will at least observe towards the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality, and will use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict. If either of the high contracting parties is forced to go to war by obvious provocation from a third party, they bind themselves to enter into an exchange of views concerning their attitude in such a conflict.
- (4) The duty of neutrality which arises out of the preceding article has no application in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made.
- (5) The making of new agreements, which render it impossible for either of the parties to observe neutrality towards

the other beyond what is provided by the preceding limitation, is excluded in conformity with the provisions in Article 2.

- (6) The high contracting parties declare that they will do all in their power to prevent differences and misunderstandings arising between either of them and other Powers.

Now had these terms been published at the time, there can be little doubt that the wealthy men who, from one motive or another, were at that time working for an understanding with Germany would have clamoured for their acceptance, and it is certain that, owing to their wealth, their control of a considerable section of the Press, and their "influence" with the politicians, the pressure which they might have exerted upon the Government would have been formidable. It would have been said by their spokesmen and stipendiaries that Germany had made an eminently fair and friendly offer, and that it behoved us to be generous in return.

Fortunately such men, though their

power for mischief is great, do not direct our foreign policy. Whether Lord Haldane realised the amazing implications involved in the proposals made to him does not appear. But the Foreign Office clearly realised them, and proposed instead a simple declaration that neither Power would take part in any aggressive design against the other. This proposal the Prussians, of course, rejected.

It is easy now to see what the Prussian plan was. The significant articles are those numbered four and five. The first nullifies the obligation to maintain neutrality "in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high-contracting parties have already made," while the other forbids the making of such agreements in future. Now the German Empire had already an offensive and defensive alliance with Austria, while England had no alliance with any European Power, and was, by the terms of the proposed agreement, forbidden to enter into one. All then that Prussia would have to do to secure the neutrality of England in the aggressive war which she was already



planning was to put up Austria to be the nominal mover in the matter. And that is, of course, exactly what, two years later, she actually did; but, very fortunately for us, without having previously succeeded in tying our hands in advance.

But though the plot failed, it carried with it its moral and its warning. It shows us very clearly what would happen if this country were mad enough to conclude any kind of peace, however apparently favourable the terms, which left the German Empire under Prussian hegemony in being, and capable of future aggression.

Had we fallen into the trap so carefully laid for us it is clear as daylight what would have happened to us. Prussia would have continued her preparations, and at the appointed time would have struck her blow at her European rivals. In addition to the advantages which she actually derived from long and elaborate preparation and from the choice of her own moment for action she would have had the advantage of sea power, of uninterrupted supplies from abroad, and of the elimination of the British forces from the number of her

opponents. She would very likely have won. She would have achieved an undisputed supremacy on the Continent, and she would at once have begun to prepare for the completion of her work by the overthrow of Great Britain. The attack which she would certainly have made upon us within a few years of a successful Continental war we should have had to meet without Allies, for the defeated Powers would have not only been exhausted by war, but embittered against us for our treason, and we should have had to defend ourselves against an enemy with all the resources of Europe virtually at his disposal.

It seems from a hundred indications which may be found in the diplomatic correspondence, and especially from the evident surprise and alarm which mingled with the anger of the German Foreign Minister when he learnt our decision, that, even after the failure of the plot of 1912, Prussia counted to the last upon our committing the suicidal folly which she desired us to commit. Our fidelity to our engagements, and our determination to resist an

aggression which must, if it had succeeded, ultimately have involved our own ruin, was evidently a very unpleasant surprise to her rulers. None the less, even after our intervention, those rulers continued to count on victory, and on a victory which should be at once speedy and complete.

How excellent a reason they had for entertaining such an expectation was not grasped in this country at the time, and is quite insufficiently grasped by the lay public even to-day. It is important that it should be seized, if only because its neglect has led, among other things, to a gross exaggeration of the enemy's achievements so far, and a consequent miscalculation of his present position and future chances. It is therefore well to emphasise the immense handicap which Prussia with her vassals enjoyed at the outbreak of the war, and the great military advantages of which she had made sure before she struck her blow.

These advantages went from beyond the obvious advantage which a deliberate criminal must always have over his victim—the fact that the criminal necessarily knows

when and where the crime is to be committed, which the victim does not. They went far beyond the incidental advantage—also necessarily appertaining to the criminal—that he is free to violate at will, and unexpectedly rules, and traditions of morals which, so long as they are inviolate, he can rely upon his opponent respecting. They were material and calculable. They consisted especially in a great initial superiority in numbers and an even greater superiority in material. At the outset the Germanic Powers could put into the field on the Western front outnumbering those of the Allies by more than two to three, while still confronting the Russians with equal and probably slightly superior numbers. For munitionment, especially on the Eastern front, there was no comparison.

This was not adequately realised because sufficient emphasis was not laid upon the distinction between the *potential* resources of the two sides in these respects and the resources available for use at the outbreak of war. It is quite true—it is indeed the essential truth which will determine the



future of the war—that the Allies have ultimately far greater resources in men, and possibly, certainly if the power of the British fleet were used to its utmost capacity, ultimately greater resources in munitionment than had the Germanic Powers. And this was, of course, as well known to the Prussian Government as to us. If they had thought that the war was to last two years they would assuredly never have provoked it. They hardly expected it to last two months.

It must again be insisted that their calculation was not absurd. The plan was thought out very thoroughly—perhaps too thoroughly, as is the Prussian way—and it seemed plausible. A blow was to be struck with overwhelming force; struck, for the better certitude of success, treacherously through neutral Belgium and Luxembourg, straight at the heart of France. Within a month, or little more, as was reckoned, the French armies would be destroyed, Paris would be seized (for the Germans guessed, and, as it proved, rightly, that modern fortifications could not stand against modern siege artillery), and

France disarmed at a blow. Great Britain, if she came in at all, could hardly continue the fight after her military Ally had been compelled to surrender. The whole force of the Russian Empire could not be destroyed. The German general staff knew that if the German people did not. But it was imagined that she could be wounded so deeply as to compel her, abandoned perforce by her Allies, to an early surrender.

That was the Prussian calculation, and it is to be found set out in detail in the works of a dozen German military and political speculators. The action of the armies throughout the first phase of the war exactly followed it.

When Prussia struck her blow, she struck to kill, meant to kill, and expected to kill the civilisation of Europe. Her blow missed its mark, but so narrowly that it would be suicidal mania to risk its repetition.

### III

#### HOW PRUSSIA FAILED

WHEN the fortress of Namur fell in August, 1914, there must have been many, both in this country and in France and Belgium—and those not the least qualified to judge of military things—who thought that the end of European civilisation had come, that another stretch of Dark Ages was ahead of us, with perhaps no hope of resurrection. For situated as we and our Allies were, unexpectedly attacked, overwhelmingly outnumbered, and caught short by an enemy who had been previously and secretly piling up his arms and munitions for two years against a war to be sprung upon the world at a date already fixed, such hopes as we dared to entertain hung upon the thinnest of

threads, and the fall of Namur seemed to snap that thread.

The loss of Namur meant more than the loss of a single citadel, though that citadel had been made the pivot of the allied position. It meant in effect something like the levelling of all the French and Belgian fortresses to the ground. It meant that the Germans had been right and the French wrong in at least one essential matter, concerning which controversy had raged in military circles before the war. It meant that modern permanent defences could not stand against modern howitzer fire directed by modern air-craft. It meant the doom of all that enormous work of fortification which the French had accomplished since 1870. And in all our hearts, whether we spoke or were silent, there was the evil whisper, "What about Paris?"

Those who knew anything of the true facts could not take comfort, as did the less instructed, in dreams of which was called "the Russian steam-roller." They knew that that foolish optimistic phrase was the inspiration of some journalist of the same



type—perhaps the same man—that has since evolved at the bidding of panicky or interested newspaper owners plenty of pessimistic phrases equally foolish; that our Allies in the East, though their mobilisation had been more rapid than the enemy expected, and they had with magnificent self-devotion used it to create a diversion by a raid into East Prussia, had not and could not have within time then calculable anything like a decisive numerical superiority on the Eastern front. And in the darkest hour, when the Western Allies were retiring headlong before the overwhelming advance of the enemy, checking it when they could, but immediately recommencing the retreat, when the French Government was abandoning Paris for Bordeaux, resolved to fight to the end what seemed a hopeless battle, came the news that the Russian invasion had been broken at Tannenberg.

From a peril almost too enormous and present for our strained nerves to appreciate, the world was saved by two things—the splendid courage, discipline, and endurance of the British and French troops

engaged, and the strategy of General Joffre, inherited in its broad lines from the great traditions of French arms and applied with consummate judgment and success. On the one hand the retreat, precipitate as it had necessarily to be, was conducted without disaster; on the other, the French commander kept his reserves free, and flung them at the moment of his choice upon the flank of the German advance, compelled the forces which still greatly outnumbered his own to retire, and pinned them to the line which, with a very few variations in either direction, they still occupy.

I am not attempting to write a military history of the war—a task for which I possess no qualifications—but it is necessary to the purpose of this book to trace the true character of the Battle of the Marne, because half of our misunderstandings of our present position, and, in consequence, the disastrous mistakes that we may make as a result of such misunderstandings are the direct result of a failure to appreciate its import. Many civilians are inclined (as they are encouraged by

others as ignorant as themselves and generally less honest who control a section of the Press) to regard the result as a sort of "draw." "The Germans," such men will say, "certainly failed to get to Paris, and that was a check for them; but equally have we and our Allies failed to drive them out of France and Belgium, and that is a check for us." From this false judgment is bred the mischievous delusion that the limit of effort on either side is now reached, and thence again the case for the disastrous consequence is deduced that the Germans will have to be expelled from French and Belgian soil, not by arms, but by "negotiation."

With the dangerous folly of this suggestion, and the utter falsity of the theory which underlies it, I shall have to deal later; but what may here be said is that the Battle of the Marne marks the final and complete failure of the original Prussian plan, the plan upon which the whole adventure was based, *the plan but for the apparently assured success of which war would not have been forced by Prussia upon Europe.*

To the instructed military opinion of Germany this was as apparent as to instructed military opinion elsewhere.

Bernhardi—who is as well worth reading when he is writing about the profession that he understands as he is intolerable and ridiculous when he is fumbling with the cruder Prussian sophistries concerning philosophy and morals—had warned his countrymen long before that they must never allow themselves to be caught between an unbeaten France and an unbeaten Russia. That is just the position in which they were from that moment in imminent danger of finding themselves; as it is the position in which they actually find themselves to-day.

The fear and, later, the consciousness of that position is the key to all that has happened since. After several violent efforts against the allied line, hammering it heavily, especially at Ypres, in the hope of breaking it and so fulfilling, though after a perilous delay, the original plan of campaign, the Prussian General Staff suddenly altered that plan and tried the alternative one—the destruction of the



Russian forces while the French were held. This had also been canvassed by Bernhardt, who had rejected it on grounds partly political. But the moment for adopting it was not ill chosen, for, though the Russians had successfully invaded Galicia, were threatening Cracow, and thence the area (all-important both for strategic and industrial reasons) of Silesia, and had seized some of the passes of the Carpathians, their geographical position, coupled with their limited industrial development, placed them at a disadvantage in the matter of munitionment. Taking advantage of this, the Germans piled up munitions, and, relying upon their superiority in this respect, made seven successive attempts to capture and put out of action the Russian armies. Each one of these attempts failed. When at last, in Lord Kitchener's words, Germany had "shot her last bolt," and the forces on either side came to a standstill as a line running from the front of Vilna to the Roumanian frontier, all the Russian armies were still in being and ready to attack again so soon as their deficiency

in military necessities could be made good.

Here again most civilian opinion tended to illusion, and was encouraged in that illusion, by the section of the Press—or, to be more exact, of the wealthy men who control the Press. They saw in it simply a defeat for our Ally. One prominent politician, a Cabinet Minister, had the almost inconceivable folly and lack of responsibility (one does not like to accuse him of anything worse) to say in a volume characteristically called "From Terror to Triumph" that Russia had evidently "made her contribution" to the war! But what was obvious to every soldier—not only to Lord Kitchener, whose very different interpretation of the facts I have already quoted, but quite as certainly to the soldiers who direct the military policy of the German Empire—was that the Russian armies were still in being like the French and British armies; that Germany had failed to escape from her dangerous position; that she was still, in Bismarck's phrase, "between the hammer and the anvil"; that, in face of Bernhardi's warn-

ing, she still had to deal with an unbeaten France and an unbeaten Russia. In that position she still remains, and, as the rulers of Prussia well know, every day during which she remains in it visibly increases the certainty of her ultimate destruction.

There is one further point to be noted. Ever since the Battle of the Marne it is observable that an element, not truly military, mingles with the military plans of the enemy. Thus, for instance, the effort against Ypres, which had a reasonable strategic object, is followed by the much-advertised "march on Calais," which failed and almost certainly must have failed, but which, if it had succeeded, would only have pushed back the allied line (which reposed on the sea and could not therefore be outflanked), and would have left the purely military situation exactly as it was. Its object was to intimidate civilian opinion in this country, perhaps to frighten us into refusing to send our newly raised levies abroad, though in fact the Germans would find it just as easy to get troops from Ostende to

London as from Calais to Dover. Of the same character was the "shelling" of Dunkirk at a range which made all idea of aiming impossible, dictated by the belief (probably erroneous) that most Englishmen know where Dunkirk is. So again the failure against Russia was followed by the theatrical display in the Balkans, for which an indirect military object might indeed be claimed, since it helped to bring in Bulgaria and to confirm the possibly wavering loyalty of Turkey, but which could not possibly affect directly the military situation upon the two fronts, where alone decisive results can be achieved on either side. Finally the violent and very expensive attack upon the French line in the neighbourhood of the town of Verdun, which we have just been watching, undertaken at first probably with the object of breaking the French line, or at least of capturing a considerable section of the French forces, is persisted in at enormous cost long after such an object was patently unattainable from motives which we may not fully understand but which are clearly more or less political.



What are those motives? What is the political object to which purely military considerations are so often and so recklessly sacrificed by the enemy? That is the question which we have now to consider.

## IV

### PRUSSIA'S LAST CHANCE

WHAT Prussia wants at the present moment is a truce. All her efforts, even her purely military efforts, are being directed increasingly to that single end.

I say that this is obvious to anyone who carefully follows the course of events, and it is the true explanation of what must strike one unacquainted with this truth—as it does strike many Americans for example—as a paradox; the contrast between the increasing violence and ferocity of Prussia's deeds, and the increasing smoothness and humanity of her words. Clumsy as the thing is, it is quite intelligible. The acts of terrorism are intended to frighten civilians in the allied nations to divide their counsels and to create a public mood more or less favourable to surrender.

The elevated sentiments are meant to appeal partly to neutral nations and partly to those sections of opinion in the allied nations which have inherited a certain tradition of idealistic or sentimental Pacifism. It is true that the first crude attempts of the Prussians to act the part of peace-lover, nation-defender, and treaty-observer have been as grotesque as a monkey trying to talk, but their intent is obvious enough.

It has been so ever since the Battle of the Marne. When, indeed, the Prussians hoped for complete victory they not only committed, but boasted, of atrocities. The earlier abominations committed in Belgium and on the line of march up to the gates of Paris were accompanied by open and exultant proclamation that "a certain frightfulness" was necessary. But when the initial attack had failed the word went out to slow down on atrocities, and for some time the German armies were more or less on their good behaviour in France, while the German Press was ordered to discover an affectionate admiration for the French—"our brave enemies whose gallantry we

have always respected," etc. etc. When the French turned away with natural disgust from this slaver the outrages on their women and children were renewed.

The same thing happened in regard to Poland. Prussia, the original author of the partition of Poland, and the most cruel and persistent enemy the Poles have had throughout their history, suddenly began to affect a warm sympathy with Polish national aspirations, and offered the Poles their "independence"—under a German prince! But the Poles knew their Prussia, and moreover the enemy committed the folly of trying at the same time to work through the Jews, whom the Poles hate much more bitterly than do the Russians. Then all the horrors that Belgium had endured were let loose on Poland.

The next move was in the direction of Russia. When the six attempts to put the Russian armies out of action had failed, Russia was approached with proposals for peace "on honourable terms," seems even to have been graciously offered an alliance and compensation at the expense of Prussia's Ally or vassal, Turkey.



Of these proposals M. Sazanoff, the very able Foreign Minister of the Tsar, has left it on record that "they were so ill-conceived that it cannot be said that they were rejected." Perhaps it was partly in revenge for this exquisitely phrased insult, but probably much more in disappointment at Russia's refusal to desert her Allies, that the German Chancellor filled his last speech with preposterous threats against Russia while making a veiled but tolerably obvious bid for peace in the West.

There are not a few indications that our own turn is coming next. When a few more of our women and babies have been burnt alive, a few more of our watering-places bombarded, a few more of our unarmed civilians treacherously drowned, a few more of our prisoners maltreated, a few more of our nurses shot, perhaps after a last effort to land a German force, however small, somewhere in these islands, so that rape and torture may be added to the toll of crimes, we shall be treated to the "very gallant enemy" stunt. Probably our old friend, the "Teutonic race,"

will be resurrected for the purpose. Prussia can always mobilise her professors even more quickly than her armies.

What sort of a peace—or rather truce—does Prussia expect to get? And why does she want it?

In answer to the first question it may safely be said that she would now accept any peace which left her military and naval power in being, the resources of her Empire—which for this purpose includes and will increasingly include the Austro-Hungarian—still at her disposal, and her international action unfettered. She will try, of course, to get more out of our fears and credulity and lack of military knowledge. But pushed to the wall in the negotiation that is all she would really insist upon. She has evidently already made up her mind to the abandonment of Belgium; the Chancellor's speech made that plain, and it is doubtful whether she would now put up much of a fight even to keep Antwerp, though that port would be very useful to her in her subsequent plans. She would try to bargain for the retention of at least part of Alsace-Lorraine, but in the last

resort she would let that go. If she is not at the moment in the mood to give up Poland, a very short time will bring her to that mood.

The terms of peace, therefore, which she would almost certainly accept, though they are, of course, not the terms which she would ask, would seem to many reasonable if not generous.

The Prussian assault against Europe has failed. On the Continent Germany is beaten, and her Prussian rulers know it if her mixed populations do not. It will be long before Prussia again takes aggressive action against her neighbours on land. Yet she cannot remain content as she is, or as she will be after the war, for it is the very doctrine upon which not only her power but her national life is built that great nations live only by aggression and expansion. If she ceased to hold and enforce that doctrine she would cease to be Prussia, and her hold over the Germanies would be gone. She can afford to accept a temporary check—she has suffered such checks before—but she cannot acquiesce in a permanent and stable peace based upon

anything but her own acknowledged superiority. A partial defeat must be followed at some not too distant date by an unchallengeable victory, a victory which will at once restore her prestige and bring material compensation for whatsoever she may have been compelled to surrender, or else Prussia must needs die, or (and that is really death in a nation) be transformed into something other than herself. Bernhardt was absolutely right when he said that, with such a philosophy as Prussia professed and believed, the alternative was "world-power or downfall."

The country marked out by every indication of fate for such a revenge is Great Britain. The British Colonial Empire, British maritime trade, British sea-power—these are the consolation stakes upon which the eyes of Berlin are now fixed. And if Prussia escapes to-day she will probably win them.





## PART II

### THE DANGER WITHIN THE GATE



## A DIAGNOSIS OF PACIFISM

If it be true, as it certainly is true, that the enemy desires above all things an escape from his present situation by way of a truce which will leave him capable of further aggression in the future, it becomes of the utmost importance to estimate justly the character and weight of the factors in the politics of this country upon which he can count for a measure of support.

Foremost amongst these factors one must mark the prevalence in certain classes of that sentiment or doctrine—it is doubtful how exactly one ought to describe it—commonly called Pacifism.

That, in some vague and mysterious fashion, fighting, wholly irrespective of the justice of the cause in which it is



undertaken, is more or less wrong, has become a sort of first principle with certain not inconsiderable sections of our population. The influence of this falsehood extends far beyond the ranks of that tiny minority which is disposed in the present instance to oppose the national cause. The antics of the "conscientious objectors" are no more than symptoms, though the toleration of these lunatics and the open encouragement given to them to exhibit their mental diseases to the astonished eyes of England and Europe is an indication that the conscience of the nation—or at least of an influential part of the nation—is not shocked by them as the conscience of most historic European communities would have been. But not all persons touched with the Pacifist morality are mad or even unpatriotic. There are undoubtedly quite a large number of people who admit for special reasons the justification of the present war, and who quite honestly desire to see it fought out until victory is attained, who nevertheless retain a certain vague and imperfectly defined sense of something immoral in the taking up of

arms—at any rate against a foreigner, for few feel any qualms of conscience about using force against their fellow-citizens if they happen to be poorer than themselves.

Now this temper—mainly found in a section of the middle class—is of great importance in the matter we are considering because, though, as I have said, many to whom it is more or less native, make an exception of the present war, and honestly and even ardently desire victory for their country, it is obvious that it is easier to persuade such people at a given moment that the time has come to put an end to hostilities than would be the case with people committed to the Christian theory of morals in the matter.

Why has this country more than any other in Europe suffered the weakening of its moral traditions in this fashion? That is a very interesting question to which more than one answer might be given. Our immemorial immunity from invasion counts for a good deal. The very widespread loss of religion, perhaps, for a good deal more. The capitalistic structure of our commercial civilisation founded upon

a proletariat is another factor not to be ignored. Neither can we ignore the influence of certain great men, remarkable in one way or another for their powers of persuasion.

In a previous book in which I made an attempt to analyse the phenomenon, I named Cobden and Shelley as the respective types, if not the respective inspirers, of commercial and sentimental Pacifism in England. I should now, I think, be inclined to trace the inspiration of both back to the illusion which was almost universal in the first decades of the nineteenth century, that the French Revolution had been a complete failure. This supposed failure was interpreted in different fashions, but it so happened that the two principal interpretations adopted by those who conceived themselves more or less in sympathy with the democratic side in the quarrel, though widely different in almost every other respect, both told in favour of Pacifism.

According to the first of these interpretations the French Revolution was right in its original aim in so far as that aim

was the creation of an ideal commonwealth based upon freedom, equality, and brotherhood. Indeed in this respect those who directed its course were to be blamed rather for being too moderate than for being too extreme, since they recognised property and marriage, and did not attempt to create an absolute equality or community of wealth. Its error lay in the resort to *violence* for the achievement of its ends. This introduction of the element of violence inevitably led to retaliatory violence on the part of the authorities, which in time produced ferocious popular reprisals which disgraced the righteous cause. The result was first civil and then foreign war, the conversion of all France into an army rather than a commonwealth, the establishment of military despotism, aggressive wars provoking a combination of Europe against France, and finally the breaking of France and of all the work of the Revolution, good and bad alike, by that same armed force to which France herself had so unwisely appealed.

That is the type of teaching of which Godwin was the principal contemporary



exponent. If it had been left to Godwin to expound, it is hardly conceivable that a set of propositions so patently and ludicrously divorced from all historical and psychological reality could have earned the serious consideration, not to say the assent, of sane men. But Godwin had among his disciples a man of splendid poetic genius, Shelley; and Shelley's influence on the youth of the coming age was to be profound. It would be an idle though a fascinating speculation to imagine what might have happened to the democratic movement in England had it taken as its literary prophet, not Shelley but Byron—a man sane in his moral theory (whatever his practice may have been), a man who thoroughly understood Europe, and perhaps the one Englishman of that generation who guessed that the Revolution had *not* failed. But for one reason or another—perhaps his unquestionable superiority as a poet, perhaps his closer affinity with the vagueness and indecision of that age—it was Shelley whose work brought inspiration to successive generations of young enthusiasts. He was the first poet that

the budding Revolutionist of the Victorian age rushed to read, and it must be admitted that it needed a strong head—especially in youth—to so far avoid the intoxication induced by such overpowering and unparalleled mastery of word-music and imagery as to ask whether what the poet was preaching was intellectually coherent or credible by reasonable men. Shelley got no nearer to Godwin to explaining—since neither believed in miracles—in what fashion, other than by violence, human rights, when invaded, were to be vindicated. He made two attempts to answer this obvious question; one in “The Masque of Anarchy,” another in “Prometheus Unbound.” In the one case he ends by flatly contradicting himself at the crucial moment; in the other he saves himself the trouble of thinking by inventing an imaginery character called Demogorgon, who should do the troublesome and unpleasant part of his work for him. But, muddled as was Shelley’s mental position, his moral influence was immense, and if we look forward to what is vaguely called the “advanced” movements of the later

nineteenth century—especially to the Socialist movement—we shall find them clogged up with a mass of moral dogmas, all wholly irrelevant to the main thesis of democracy, whether political or social, but all more or less to be found in the writings of Shelley—vegetarianism, free love, and the greatest and incomparably the most mischievous of these was Pacifism.

There was, however, another school of Radicals which arose on the morrow of the Revolution and which criticised it on different grounds but arrived at a somewhat similar verdict. In the judgment of this school the sin of the Revolution was intellectual, and consisted in the acceptance as its basis of an abstract creed. It founded itself on the mystical dogma of the rights of man, which seemed to the new school as little self-evident or demonstrable as the mystical dogma of the divine right of kings, which it sought to replace. The true test to be applied to systems of Government was the test of utility, and the privileges of kings and nobles were to be condemned, not because in the abstract they were unjust, but be-

cause in the concrete they were useless, wasteful, and mischievous. Such was the criticism advanced at the time by Bentham, and from Bentham and the utilitarians this materialist philosophy descended to Cobden and the Manchester School, through whom it profoundly influenced the political outlook of the English middle class.

This influence was also favourable to Pacifism. For when all institutions were asked to justify themselves by showing a visible and material profit, war naturally seemed to many people the most gigantic example of profitless waste of life and wealth. Its causes often seemed sentimental, and sentiment was the Satan of the new creed; the honour paid to it was traditional, and to these men—it was one of their worst limitations—tradition seemed a contemptible refuge from the mentally weak. It is true that the middle class which backed Cobden so solidly in the matter of Free Trade fell away from him to a considerable extent when the issue of war was raised. None the less, had his teaching as to fundamentals profoundly in-



fluenced them, so that while patriotism, anger, just or unjust, sympathy with some particular cause or what not might lead them in a particular instance to clamour for war the impression that war in the abstract was a stupid "barbaric" thing and, above all, a waste of money was still present at the back of their minds, and showed itself very markedly when it was other people who were at war. Look up the cartoons in *Punch* published during the American Civil War—a war fought in good faith on both sides on as portentous and worthy an issue as any that could possibly appeal to arms—and you will see how deeply Cobdenism had coloured the mind of Victorian England. The middle-class Englishman of that age did really think at bottom that war was justified only by some solid commercial advantage obtained by it and that judged by that test it is generally a fools' business.

This conception of war remained a sort of undercurrent during the last decades of the nineteenth century in spite of the Imperialist movement—indeed in some respects that movement was akin to it, for,

while it defended war, most of its exponents accepted the need of a tangible and material profit as a set off to its losses. With the reaction against Imperialism the old Cobdenite idea revived, and how easy it still was to conjure with it is shown by a very amusing episode which occurred on the eve of the great war.

A Harmsworth journalist, named Ralph Lane, seems to have come across some of Cobden's neglected writings and speeches, and, selecting some of the crudest propositions contained therein, lumped them together in a book which he called "The Great Illusion." To make the result more impressive to the public he dropped the name of Lane—associated for those who had heard it at all with nothing more impressive than the *Paris Daily Mail*—and called itself "Norman Angell." His thesis was Cobden's: that war can never bring commercial profit and ought therefore under all circumstances to be avoided. His absurd book—with its mixture of silly truisms and pestilentially false morals—was hailed as a masterpiece of original creative thought, and it was sedulously

boomed, especially by his ex-employer, whose tributes took the form of mournful regrets that so stupendous an intellect should have adopted and made so plausible an anti-Imperial thesis. How long the bluff could have been kept up before somebody else happened on a speech or two of Cobden's somewhere in the 'forties or 'fifties containing the new discovery verbatim, one cannot say, for the war caught Lane in a full flood tide of success. He was too shrewd to abide the issue, and escaped for the United States, where he is now contributing anti-British but by no means Pacifist articles to the American papers. I think I ought to add that I do not really believe that in the first instance Lane had any other motive than to emulate his master, Harmsworth, by securing the fame and profit to be got from a successful journalistic spoof, though the effect of his action so far as it went was undoubtedly to the advantage of Prussia.

But the main interest which to-day attaches to the career of this curious charlatan lies in the continued presence among us of the kind of men whom he took in,

and the considerable chance which Prussia may have of taking them in once more.

There were, especially in the commercial classes, a good many men of power and wealth who were at first opposed to our entrance into the war—largely on the exalted ground put forward by the idealistic cocoa manufacturer, Cadbury, that if we stood by we could make money out of both sides—who came into line regretfully, who hoped for a short and easy war, and who would now not be unwilling to conclude an early peace upon terms which would leave the power of Prussia intact. Their organs in the Press, though not of the widest circulation, possess a certain dignity and influence, even apart from the wealth of their proprietors. The *Manchester Guardian* and the *Nation* may be taken as typical.

With the wealthy commercial Pacifists powerful in politics and in journalism the fervent sentimental Pacifists constituting a certain element—not large in numbers, but comprising some important elements—in the Socialist movement, it is clear that the efforts to influence opinion in this



country in favour of a premature peace the Prussians have certain material upon which to work. It remains to be seen what use they are making and are likely to make in the future of this material.

## II

### POTSDAM AND PACIFISM

THE elements in the Socialist movement which were more or less hostile to the national cause might be classified under three heads. There was the element to which I have already alluded—the Shelleyan element. This was largely middle class, but it included a number of young working men, keen on self-improvement. It received considerable reinforcement from Nonconformists who were doubtful about their God, and were looking round for something “undenominational” to believe in. The body calling itself the Independent Labour Party, or I.L.P., may be taken as fairly representative of this section. This type in its full and fatuous purity is almost unrepresented in politics; it has hardly brains enough even for so

futile a job. In practice it is more or less represented by certain professional politicians who look to its support for a career, and timidly give expression to its aspirations, though before the war they were among the most docile of the servants of the front benches. Mr Macdonald—though he has many other irons in the fire—and Mr Snowden are men of this kind.

The old guard of Social Democracy in this country was and is all but unanimous in support of the national cause. The conclusion to which the middle-class papers, even of the more honest type, have generally jumped, that the division between the patriotic and unpatriotic Socialists is identical with the division between the moderate and extreme Socialists, is not only false, but almost the reverse of the truth. The Marxians of the strict type, whatever the defects of their creed, were not Pacifist. They got their revolutionary inspiration from the Continent, and largely escaped Shelleyan infection. They had the enormous advantage derived from the leadership of Mr Hyndman, who was

thoroughly familiar with the European situation and knew well that a victory for Prussia must mean the defeat of any possible form of democracy.

On the other hand, the vaguely Pacifist Socialists, whose condition of mind I have attempted to describe, were necessarily Pacifist in peace as in war. They had as little appetite for the violence in resistance to the oppression of their class as in defence of the rights of their country. They were shocked by such phrases as the "Class War"—perhaps the one Marxian phrase which represents an indisputable reality—for they were men who hated realities. This for the rank and file. Their leaders, such as Ramsay Macdonald, were professionals on the look-out for jobs, and not only permitted but helped every step that was taken by politicians financed by the capitalists towards the enslavement of the workers.

Broadly one may say of the Socialistic movement that on the patriotic side was the ordinary Trade Unionist who had never really been a Socialist at all, who had very properly wanted security for the



livelihood of his class, and who now wanted even more ardently security for the life of his country and the thorough-going Socialists who had really thought out their position. On the unpatriotic side were the muddy-minded Pacifists assisted by a rabble of refugees—largely German, Russian, and Polish Jews.

Now the extraordinary thing that one began to note about this division was this : that while the former had the enormous superiority in numbers, in ability and in public repute, the latter appeared to have a quite startling advantage in financial support.

I am not speaking without knowledge. Everyone who has been in the Socialist movement, as I have, knows that Socialist papers are always more or less on the rocks as regards money. More especially has this always been the case with that ably conducted and pluckily uncompromising Socialist organ called *Justice*. For years the invitation to Socialists in general to save *Justice* had been as hardy an annual as the formation of a new Socialist society (consisting of seceders from various other

Socialist societies) to promote Socialist unity. But, though it was always difficult to raise money for *Justice*, and as soon as it became clear that its editor, Mr H. W. Lee, an uncompromising fighter through many years of persistent discouragement, believed in the cause of the Allies and insisted on supporting their cause in his paper, there appeared to be no difficulty at all in raising money for a paper to be called *The Call*, avowedly established as a pro-Prussian rival to *Justice*. Similarly, at a time when most papers, even when possessed of large circulations, considerable advertisement revenue, and solid financial backing, find it necessary to reduce their size, the pro-Prussian *Labour Leader* has no difficulty in issuing supplements. The *Herald*, which when it was a fighting pro-working class paper never had much money to spare even for current expenses, is able, now that it has become a Pacifist paper, to get itself sold by hawkers all over Fleet Street and the Strand.

Personally I have very little doubt as to where the money so expended ultimately

comes from, though I quite believe that many of those who accept are ignorant—though they have no right to be content to remain ignorant—of its source.

In this connection let me note another new phenomenon—the appearance in connection with the Pacifist-Socialist movement of men who were never before supposed to take any interest in the labour question. I will take a single instance, the strongest that I know, that of the gentleman who calls himself “E. D. Morel,” and I will leave it to my readers to draw their own conclusions from the facts which I shall set forth.

According to his own account in *Who's Who* “Morel” was born in 1873, being the son of Edmond Morel-de-Ville. His father's nationality and his own are not stated, but it appears in the public records that in 1896 one “Georges Edmonde Morel-de-Ville” was naturalised at Liverpool, giving his previous nationality as French. We also find the late Mr Holt of Liverpool left in his will an annuity to “George Morel-de-Ville, commonly

known as E. D. Morel." I think it reasonable in the absence of any contradiction to identify this person with "Morel." In that case it would appear (always supposing his own statements to be reliable) that he was a French citizen up to the age of twenty-three. He must have been resident in England for at least five years before he reached that age, or he could not have been naturalised, and this period of five years it will be observed covers the years of French military service. Beyond these inferences, all that I can discover about the man is that he seems once to have passed under the name of Deville, that he was in the employment of Sir Alfred Jones, the head of a great Liverpool shipping firm who was hand in glove with old Leopold of Belgium, that he left this employment apparently after a quarrel, and went to the rival firm of John Holt & Sons, who had, as it would seem, their own private quarrel with old Leopold, and that the head of this firm not only backed him in the Congo agitation, but left him the annuity above alluded to.



So much for the man's origin. One could only say about it that the changes of name, the suspicion of desertion, and the general air of mystery and concealment which surrounds the story suggests the type of man who *might* be a foreign agent or spy. Of course they are not direct evidence.

The first direct evidence I find is "Morel's" public career subsequent to the inception of the Congo agitation. A close examination of that career will, I think, firmly establish the following thesis: *that "Morel's" very various activities assume an aspect of complete unity if one supposes him to have been employed by the German Government and desirous in all things of promoting the interests of that Government, while no other motive will connect them in any way with each other or indeed explain any two of them.*

In order to establish this thesis I propose to set out in parallel columns the public activities of "Morel" during the last ten years, and the principal activities of German diplomacy during the same period :

1905 onwards

"Morel" engaged in working up the Congo agitation. *His principal associate in this agitation was Sir Roger Casement, now admittedly in the employment of Potsdam.* In 1912 he, in "Morel in Diplomacy," expressed the hope that Germany may be able to set an example in relation to this matter of faithful adherence to international treaties, which, besides, in this particular instance, redounding to the benefit of black humanity and legitimate trade, will free her hand when presently (as I devoutly hope she may, and if the Foreign Office by that time is cured of its teutophobia in concert with Britain) *she sets herself to insist upon the Belgians fulfilling their treaty obligations in the Congo State.*

1905 onwards

Germany demands a "place in the sun" in Africa. German writers and statesmen point to the Congo as providing an opportunity for German expansion. In 1914 Germany approaches France and (indirectly) England with a proposal to partition the Belgian Congo on the ground that "the burden is too heavy" for Belgium. (See paper published by Belgian Government in August, 1915.)

1911-1912

"Morel" denounces the French action in Morocco; publishes "Morocco in Diplomacy"; defends German action in regard to Agadir, and protests against the action of England; claims that it is in the interest of England that Germany should take as much of the Congo as possible on the ground that the French treatment of British traders is abominable, while the German is just and generous.

1911-1912

Germany attempts to secure a footing in Morocco by the *coup* of Agadir. Failing in this (partly owing to the solidarity of France and England) she attempts to bargain for a large slice of the French Congo.

1913-1914

"Morel" takes part in and probably inspires the formation of "the Anglo-German Friendship Society."

1913-1914

Germany has now determined on war with France and Russia, and fixed the date for August. (For summary of evidence of this see first chapter of Mr Belloc's "Great War," also French Yellow Book, Nos. 2 and 5.) She is seeking to secure the neutrality of England (see British Blue Book, No. 160, etc.).

August, 1914

August, 1914

“Morel” founds War breaks out between England and the “Union of Democratic Control,” and Germany. begins to write for the *Labour Leader*.

Now the thing to note about this summary of “Morel’s” public career is not merely the coincidence of his activities with those of the Prussian Government, but also their utter lack of coherence in any other respect.

For instance, “Morel” might have taken up the Congo agitation (as did many perfectly honest people) out of sincere indignation at the alleged ill-treatment of the natives. But in that case one would expect his next appearance would be in connection with the ill-treatment of natives somewhere else—in German colonies, for instance, or even in British ones, but his enthusiasm for “black humanity” does not appear to have extended beyond the requirements of the Prussian diplomatic scheme for the partition of the Congo. But the connection between the two is emphasised by his own extraordinarily com-



plicated sentence quoted above, the intent of which is clear enough even if its meaning were not underlined by the diplomatic incidents recorded in the Belgian paper, an incident of which none of us knew anything at the time—though perhaps “Morel” did.

Again, dropping the wrongs of the black man, he takes up the wrongs of the British trader. Now “Morel’s” present attitude might be explained by his being a convinced Pacifist. But in “Morocco in Diplomacy” he is not at all Pacifist, but rather Jingo. Only the Jingoism is directed against France; *and that at a time when Germany has just suffered a partial diplomatic defeat owing to the united action of France and England.*

Finally I appeal to everyone acquainted with Socialists and Labour movement to say whether before 1914 “Morel” ever showed the faintest interest in Socialism or Labour. All his connections were on the other side, with the great capitalists’ interests like the Holts’. Nevertheless, when it appears that one section of the Socialists—a small minority of them I am

thankful to believe—*constituted the one organised political group that could be exploited for the purpose of dividing the nation*, "Morel" begins to organise the Union of Democratic Control, and begins to shed the light of his countenance on the *Labour Leader* and the I.L.P.

Let us take the "Union" first. Its first public manifesto appeared on September 19th, 1914; but this was not the first document signed by "Morel" in connection therewith, nor was it the first indication the public had of what was afoot. On September 10th of the same year the *Morning Post* published a circular sent out privately inviting subscriptions for the formation of such a society, and signed by the same people, with two exceptions, who afterwards signed the public appeal.

A comparison between these two documents is extremely interesting. The definition of the objects to be pursued is for the most part identical in both, and carries with the present avowed (and apparently harmless) "objects" of the "Union of Democratic Control"; but one most important passage which appears in the secret

circular sent out for the purpose of obtaining money from certain unnamed persons, whose views were doubtless known to the Committee, is significantly omitted, both from the original public manifesto and from the declared objects of the society. In the circular one of the objects is described as follows : " To aim at securing such terms that this war will not, *either through the humiliation of the defeated nation* or an artificial rearrangement of frontiers, merely become the starting-point for new national antagonisms and future wars." From the public appeals as from the official objects of the " Union " as finally settled, all reference to the " humiliation " of the defeated nation disappears, and we are left with some innocuous if somewhat vague observations on the future conduct of foreign policy, with the substance of which we should most of us agree.

But that deleted phrase gives the game away. It is clear that its authors could not have supposed themselves to have any power to save England or her Allies from humiliation in case of defeat. It must

therefore have been the humiliation of the German Empire which it sought to avert. I have always admitted that the avowed creed of the "Union of Democratic Control" is perfectly compatible with the most ardent patriotism. I myself could, I believe, sign it without doing any violence to my conscience. I shall *not*, however, join the "Union," because I know too much about its origin. This tender regard for the Kaiser's feelings, this anxiety to spare the devastators of Belgium anything that could wound their sensibility, shows clearly enough what was the real motive of those who inaugurated the society, and, above all, of those *on whose money it was originally floated*.

"E. D. Morel" signed both appeals as "honorary secretary *pro tem*." He afterwards dropped the *pro tem*, and was duly installed as "honorary secretary and honorary treasurer" for the "Union." It is, by the way, one of the small incidental mysteries about "Morel" that he is so fond of "honorary" offices of this description. He is always declaring that he is a poor man. The various movements



which he organises must entail upon him an immense amount of work. There is not the shadow of reason why he should not quite honourably take a salary for the work he does if we are to assume that work itself is in no way shameful. Yet, in connection with the "Union," as in connection with the Congo agitation, he appears to do all his work for nothing, and what is more remarkable to thrive and prosper thereon. It is not a very important point, but it looks odd.

Of the movements of the other signatories to the manifesto of the U.D.C., and of the other members of its executive I do not hear speak. But of the objects of the "honorary secretary" one may form a pretty good idea by studying the article which he contributed at this time and for some time after to the *Labour Leader*.

My readers are probably pretty familiar with the general trend and temper of Pacifist literature. It may be observed week by week in the leading articles and notes of the *Labour Leader* itself. Now I have not the space to reproduce such extracts from "Morel's" writings as

would be necessary to prove my contention. I must invite my readers to study them for themselves. But I affirm (and anyone who likes can test what I say) that the tone and character of "Morel's" articles were wholly different from those of ordinary Pacifist writers.

The ordinary Pacifist appeals primarily to the general sentiment against war. He says that war is "barbaric and unchristian." He says that the different peoples have no real quarrel with each other. He fixes the blame upon the Government, and declares that it is impossible to assign the whole guilt to any one of them, but that all are equally or almost equally guilty. But if he selects any particular Government for special attack, it is usually his own. That, I think, is a fair summary of the sort of thing you will find in the editorial columns of the *Labour Leader*, and in the speeches of Pacifists, especially of Pacifist Socialists.

"Morel's" attitude is quite different. He is a man working out a brief, and he works it out as elaborately as any barrister, with references to Blue Books

(nearly always false and fraudulent) and columns of statistics all complete. And the object of this brief is very significant. It is not to show that war itself is evil, or even specially and directly to show that Great Britain has its share in the responsibility for the present war. It is directed to show that the *whole* responsibility (of course "Morel" does not put it quite as strongly as that, but that is what his argument points to) rests upon, not Germany, and not in the main Great Britain, but France and Russia. It is definitely suggested that there was a long-nurtured conspiracy on the part of our two Allies, backed by elaborate intrigue and secret armament to crush and humiliate Germany, that Germany struck virtually in self-defence, and that our part in the matter was that of dupes forced against our own interests to assist the conspirators. That in effect is "Morel's" thesis throughout. It is not the usual thesis of the English Pacifist. *But it is the very thesis which a German agent would obviously be instructed to maintain in this country, just as he would be instructed to*

*maintain a contrary thesis in France or Russia.*

There is much else that I might say about this man. I might contrast his factitious indignation over the "atrocities in the Congo" with his indifference not only to the notorious atrocity of German rule in her African colonies, but to the abominations committed in the face of all Europe on men, women, and children of his own colour in Belgium and France, in Poland and Serbia, but my space is limited, and I prefer to end with one further question.

If the man is innocent, why does he not clear himself? If the man has an explanation, why does he not give it? If he has nothing to be ashamed of, why does he hide? For hide he does, and has ever since an inquiry into his past was begun. I myself attended a meeting addressed by him some time after the U.D.C. was founded. I put him some questions. There are those who were present who can testify to his demeanour in answering them. Of course I had to take my turn with others, and he pro-



ceeded to spin out every answer to the length of about ten minutes each, evidently in order to avoid further cross-examination. At last, however, I succeeded in flinging the challenge to proceed against me giving him publicly the name of my solicitors. Neither they nor I have heard from him since, but so far as I know, and I have naturally watched closely, he has never since ventured to address a public meeting in London.

I have gone at some length into the career of this particular man because it is the best illustration I know of the fashion in which the vague and foolish Pacifism of a considerable section of the Socialist and other "advanced" movements in England were exploited in the interests of the most brutal and least intelligent militarist Government in Europe. No one supposes that a man like the late Mr Keir Hardie, for example, would have taken money directly from the Prussian Government. But he would have taken it from "Morel," and "Morel" would have taken it from—well, anywhere.

### III

#### THE FINANCIERS

THE Government of Great Britain at the date when war was declared in August, 1914, was a plutocracy. Everyone knows in what fashion that Government was administered. Nominally the executive power was distributed among a small group of professional politicians, for the most part closely interrelated, and financed by secret payment made to them by powerful and wealthy commercial interest through the medium of what were called "the Party funds." For the better maintenance of this system of government the politicians, though constituting one body for all purposes concerned with the interests of their profession, were arbitrarily divided into two teams, labelled respectively "Liberal" and "Conservative," or later "Unionist," and it was arranged

that only one of these teams should at a given time be actually in receipt of public money, while the other should be "in opposition"—that is to say should attract to itself the advantage of any resentment which might be felt against the action of the existing Government, deflecting such a resentment in such a fashion as should prevent its interference with the smooth working of the system.

All this, as most people by this time realised, and as everyone acquainted with the inner workings of politics knew long before, was play acting. The essential fact remained that the dominant power in the State resided in the great moneyed interest which financed the politicians and enabled them by its subsidies to control Parliament and the electorate.

Such a system of government is properly and accurately described as a plutocracy, and, in considering the national situation, it is essential to remember that a plutocracy involves certain specific evils and perils from which other forms of government, however defective, are commonly free.

Thus if you establish government by the corporate will of the whole people you may—especially if your populace is not well accustomed to the exercise of such authority—be subjected to dangers arising from violent and irrational gusts of popular passion, or again from internecine division within the State. All democracies have been confronted and probably always will be confronted with these perils. On the other hand you will find, if you pass the test, a marvellous power of endurance arising from the fact that every citizen knows the purpose for which he is fighting, and approves that purpose. If you establish monarchy or personal government by a single individual however chosen you will risk disaster from the personal idiosyncrasies and secret insanities (for every man has his mad spot) of that individual ; while you will have the very great advantage which is to be derived from the concentration of power and responsibility in a single hand. If you give power to a political oligarchy—that is to a certain class of citizens endowed by tradition with special privileges—you will have a certain amount



of oppression of the unprivileged ; but as against this you will have a very stable political organisation, capable of exceptional unanimity in public affairs and of exceptional continuity in public policy, and reposing for its defence upon the instant response of a well-disciplined population to a provisional authority which it has come to regard as natural. England especially has profited in the past by the unquestionable advantage (mingled as they are with disadvantages which for me at least outweigh them), which belong to the oligarchical type of government.

Only it must be noted that these advantages exist only so long as the qualifications of the aristocrat are traditional and enjoy universal respect. They cease to exist when the position of oligarch comes to depend not upon a thing which gives some sort of guarantee or identity with the nation, such as lineage, but upon something purely accidental and generally indicating, rather than otherwise, a low type of human ideal such as the possession of money and its ready expenditure for political purposes.

There may be something national about an aristocracy. There is nothing national about a plutocracy. Under the system of government which we suffered during the epoch immediately preceding the war there was little security, I do not say for popular rights—for the system did not contemplate that—but for national interests.

Any man could, by paying sufficient money to the politician who was selected by the other politicians for the particular function of collecting money from their paymasters—called, by an anachronism, the “Chief Whip,” though his duties had far more to do with the peerage market in Downing Street than with the control of a House of Commons which had long become impotent—purchase anything from a peerage to a policy. There was no more necessity that he should be an Englishman than that he should be a gentleman. All that was necessary was that he should have the money, preferably in cash, for the Central Office was for various reasons shy of cheques.

This peculiarity of our politics was un-

doubtedly used by the enemy before the war, and is almost certainly being so used to-day. We shall probably never know how much German money there has been and is in the secret Party funds.

The case of Sir Edgar Speyer, still the proud possessor of a British baronetcy and a British privy councillorship, though he has one brother in Frankfort advising the Prussian Government, and another in New York notoriously promoting and financing the pro-German propaganda throughout the United States, is not without significance; but it is only one of many. The man "Morel" of whom I have already spoken has openly threatened the Government with reprisals in the matter of the secret Party funds if they venture to investigate the origin of his own apparently ample resources, and I have little doubt that this has been at least in part responsible for his astonishing immunity.

But whatever political payments may have been made with the direct intention of influencing British policy in the interests of Prussia, these probably consti-

tute a comparatively small element in the danger to which I am now trying to draw attention. That danger consists primarily in the unnational character of much of the plutocracy that rules us. We have virtually given the control of our Government to the possessors of spare cash ; and no one is in a better position to provide spare cash for the use of politicians, or has a more direct interest in doing so than the financier.

Finance is cosmopolitan. Those who control the money markets in this country are never typically national—as the great landowners in a sense were—and are often quite definitely the reverse. The great financial corporations do not confine their activities to one European country or group of countries. They have interests everywhere. Their sympathies hardly count, and certainly cannot be trusted. Most of them are Jewish. Many of them, so far as they can be said to be centred in any one country, are centred in the German Empire. Even those which have their headquarters in this country or in one of its Allies' have important branches



in the country of the enemy. Of their nature they are cosmopolitan.

Cosmopolitan finance is, in matters such as are involved in the present war, necessarily Pacifist, not from moral conviction but from plain self interest. A small war against a weak and undeveloped state it will often back, for such a war may promote its interest. But a war like this which necessarily involves the life or death of one or other of several great European states it will inevitably oppose, for it has invested in the continuity and solvency of each and all of them. It may be granted that it would not pay the financiers to see Great Britain or France or even Russia completely obliterated. But neither would it pay them to see Germany completely obliterated. To a peace which would so far as possible re-establish the *status quo anti bellum* all their inclinations would tend.

It must be remembered that this war was entered upon by the more patriotic section of the governing class in defiance of the financiers and their "influence." On the day on which the first shots were

exchanged between Austria and Serbia, I was myself present at the meeting of a society called the *Entente Cordiale*, held to unveil at Norman Cross a monument to the French prisoners who died in captivity during the Napoleonic war. The present Lord Rothschild, then the Hon. Walter Rothschild, was in the chair. He made a speech in which he congratulated us on the improved relations now existing between this country and France, and added that all we now wanted was to extend those good relations so that they might include other great European powers. In view of the political situation at the moment the meaning of this hint was clear enough; and I went home satisfied that the Rothschilds were working for British neutrality, and only hoping very faintly that they would not succeed in dishonouring our flag. Several things happened during the week which followed—that awful week when every decent Englishman was wondering whether he could ever again show his face on the Continent—confirmed my impressions.

The *Daily News*, which was then openly

for neutrality, was publishing letters from Liberal and Labour members in that sense. Most of these letters were from men who might have been expected in any case to favour such a policy, men who belonged by tradition to the Pacifist wing of the Party. But among the names quoted was to be found that of the Hon. Niel Primrose, who was supposed to be by conviction and inheritance a "Liberal Imperialist," but who was also by blood a Rothschild. A few days later, on the eve of Germany's ultimatum to France and Russia, the late Lord Rothschild told an interviewer that, so far as this country at any rate was concerned, there would be no war.

As it was with the Rothschilds so it was with all the smaller fry of cosmopolitan finance. They did not want war, and if war was to come they wanted England kept out of it. The actual coming of war of course silenced them for a time, for it is of the nature of such men to hide when the public mind is excited. But the motives which led them to deplore the outbreak of war still exist to render them anxious for peace at the earliest possible moment, while

a new motive has been added which would make a completely victorious peace, even if it could be obtained immediately, something like a disaster to them—the desire to keep the German Empire in being so that the security for their loans may not suffer.

In a word, so far from this war being, as some of the sillier kind of Socialists say, a financiers' war, it is a war undertaken in the teeth of the unanimous opposition of cosmopolitan finance ; and those who desire to achieve a complete triumph for the Allies will have to achieve it in the teeth of the same opposition. The " influence " of the financiers with our politicians must therefore be regarded as one of the most valuable cards in Prussia's present hand.



## IV

### THE POLITICIANS

THE system of government by professional politicians secretly paid by great financial interests, which prevailed before the war, and which still prevails, subject to the modifications created by the absolute necessity of giving a degree of freedom within their own provinces to the naval and military authorities, is (apart from its moral repulsiveness) a bad system from the national point of view, primarily for the reason already given that it gives power to mere money, without public responsibility, without any public knowledge even of the names of the repositories of such power, and without any security that these men are not indifferent or hostile to the nation whose policy they are none the less able to control. But

there are other features connected with that system which necessarily aggravate the danger.

First, its secrecy. The rulers of the country act at best upon their private judgment, at worst under orders from unnamed men who have acquired financial authority over their actions. To those whom they are supposed to "represent" they are in no sense really responsible, nor have these any organ of control, or even of protest which could be easily and effectively employed to check the politicians and their paymasters if they were to attempt an unnational policy.

It is not so with our Allies. In Russia the suspicion—apparently quite unfounded—that the Government might, after the great retreat, be contemplating an inconclusive peace was sufficient to arouse a movement so formidable that, if it had not turned out that the Government, like the people, was thoroughly in earnest, an improvised committee of public safety would have been ready to take over the conduct of the war whether the legitimate authorities liked it or not. In

France, if the politicians were believed to be playing the Prussian game, they would at once be squelched by a military *coup d'état*, which the whole populace would enthusiastically support. But we in England have no such securities. Our soldiers are accustomed to the doctrine—a sound one in nine cases out of ten—that it is a soldier's duty to carry out orders, and that politics are outside his legitimate purview; and since we have not in the past been a military people—in the sense of a people trained as a whole to arms and conscious that we may all be called upon to use them—we have little comprehension of those rare but important occasions when a soldier, speaking for a nation of soldiers, has a clear democratic right to override the civil authorities. On the other hand, our populace has almost entirely lost the instinct for corporate initiative. Anyone comparing the conduct of an English crowd charged by the police or the military with that of a French, or, for that matter, an Irish crowd, under like circumstances, will understand the nature of the difference I

am indicating. It is not a question of physical courage, as the exploits of English troops conclusively proved. It is a question of that power of instantly recognising and instinctively co-operating with the general will, which is the essence of democracy. And it extends far beyond the matter of street-fighting into every department of national politics.

I have already alluded to the "Union of Democratic Control" as one of the instruments employed by the very suspicious character who calls himself "Morel" in his efforts to mould the democratic and Socialist movements to the purposes of Prussia. But it seems to me that there is at this moment some need of a genuine "Union of Democratic Control," not for the purpose of averting unauthorised wars, but for the purpose of averting an unauthorised peace. The "democratic control" of the Pacifists has never been anything but a piece of hypocrisy. Everybody in the least degree acquainted with England knows that when the majority of the politicians in power, with the present Prime Minister at their



head, determined, though with hesitations and delays, on an honourable and patriotic policy, in spite of the protests of the minority led by Mr George and the unanimous opposition of cosmopolitan finance, they achieved the most popular act of their largely misspent lives. The nation backed them at once, and would certainly have felt bitterly humiliated and savagely indignant had any other course been adopted. But while it is rubbish to say that war was made without our consent—save in the sense that the English people would have made it four days earlier—it is true that as matters stand peace might be made without our consent. A peace which left the Prussian military power in being would undoubtedly produce an outburst of violent and unanimous national indignation, would turn every ex-soldier into a rebel, would cost the politicians that made it their “careers,” and ought to cost them their heads. It remains none the less true that the people of these islands would have virtually no power of interfering until the mischief had been done.

That is the consideration which makes it imperative that public opinion should be roused in time to give so emphatic a mandate against any peace that did not involve in the fullest sense the annihilation of Prussia as a military power, that no politician could venture to disregard such a mandate.

For if there is one thing that the whole course of the war has proved, it is that even the best of the professionals have not ceased to be professionals. The "Party truce" will impress only those who were ignorant and provincial enough to have been previously impressed by the equally unreal "Party war" which is supposed to have preceded it. The only good result that one can expect from the lumping of all the professional politicians together in one "Coalition" Ministry—by way of replacing the previous secret collusive conferences between them held behind the speaker's chair or at each other's houses—has been to convince even the dullest that the only method of securing decent government is not the replacing of wicked "Liberals" by good "Conservatives,"

or *vice versa*, but by making a clean sweep of the lot. It may safely be taken as a general rule since the war began that everything valuable that has been done has been done by the soldiers and the populace, and everything mischievous by the politicians.

And here is another peril. Since the beginning of the war we have suffered from the fact that the system of government under which we lived and under which the war had necessarily to be conducted was no longer either trusted or respected by the people. That unquestionable fact, together with the other fact that some of the concomitants of that system were too unsavoury to bear public discussion, has repeatedly weakened the hands even of those of our rulers whose ultimate purpose is sincerely patriotic. It has prevented them from locking up men like "Morel," who publicly hinted at exposures in relation to the secret Party funds if the sources of revenue of the "Union of Democratic Control" were inquired into. It has forced them to tolerate the grotesque spectacle of Mr

Philip Snowden occupying a seat on the "Liquor Control Board," while he makes anti-recruiting speeches and secures immunity for his wife after she has publicly confessed herself guilty of treason, acknowledging in an article in the *Socialist Review* that when in the United States she did her best to prevent arms and munitions from that country reaching the Allies. It should be observed that no such immunity is extended to those who have no pull on the political machine. While on the one hand, Alfred Harmsworth (now known by the typically serial-*esque* title, presumably chosen by himself, of "Lord Northcliffe of the Isle of Thanet") is allowed to refuse recruiting advertisements which the military authorities have desired to print and to stimulate panic at critical moments by every kind of sensational falsehood, and while on the other, the wealth of the Quakers who control the Cocoa Trust has secured for the so-called "conscientious objectors" not only relief from the duty of serving their country, but the opportunity of exhibiting their mental diseases



for the edification of the world, an impolitic severity is exercised against the Irish Sinn Feiners, who, absurd and suicidal as their "rebellion" was, were at any rate possessed of personal courage and moved by a kind of patriotism, however wrong-headed. Similarly the more or less anti-national Socialist paper, *Forward*, is tolerated so long as it merely discourages recruiting like Mr Snowden, or hampers the production of armaments like Mrs Snowden; is dropped on at once when it ventures to give a perfectly accurate account of the reception accorded to a prominent professional politician who suffered a humiliating rebuff, not in the least because the men whom he attempted to address were pro-German—one group of them refused to listen to him on the specific ground that they "preferred to get on with the making of munitions"—but because, in order to conciliate certain wealthy men whose political subscriptions are useful, he had repeatedly and deliberately insulted them.

The most miserable episode and all that

led up to it is typical of the sort of thing that is weakening us and making easier the task of the enemy, which, as has already been said, is not now so much to defeat us in war as to create such a temper among us as may lead us to give up the struggle before victory is complete. While the nation as a whole rallied to the nation's cause at the first shot with a magnificent unanimity and self-forgetfulness, those who controlled the administration, whether directly as professional politicians, or indirectly as subscribers to funds or owners of newspapers, could not even for a moment forget their private motives whether of superstition or greed. Some of the wealthy dictators of public policy had a private fad of teetotalism which they had always wished to impose upon men poorer than themselves. The war, by disarming that popular protest which had always appeared whenever such imposition was attempted, offered an opportunity of exploiting the patriotism of the masses for the destruction of their liberties and traditions. Therefore a politician was put up to make the false statement—

proved false by subsequent inquiry—that the drinking habits of the people were hindering the production of munitions, and as a result a ridiculous set of “drink regulations,” for which no soldier had asked or ever would have asked. And the task of framing these regulations—the only excuse for which was that they were supposed to help us to win the war—was entrusted, among others, to Mr Philip Snowden, who has publicly declared that we cannot win the war in any case.

There were other persons intent on exploiting the patriotism of the mass, whose motive was nothing so clean and honourable as sectarian fanaticism. The Trade Unions had consented to abrogate their rules in the interest of the national cause—which may strike middle classes as a small thing, but which really amounts to much more than would be involved in the rich giving up the whole of their property, and more closely resembles the action of a nation of peasant proprietors who should give up the whole of their land. They asked only for some security that

advantage should not be taken of their patriotism to enslave them when the war was over. But a number of rich men who were making huge private profits out of the war thought the opportunity an admirable one for the smashing of Trade Unionism once and for all, and so the same politician—who had always been a particularly subservient tool of the great employers—was put up to declare that the Trade Unions were traitorously obstructing munition-making. This also proved on examination to be a lie; but it did its work—that is, Prussia's work—in sowing disgust and dissension among the workers.

And with this disgust and dissension came also a measure of discouragement—a discouragement, as we shall see, deliberately and treasonably encouraged by a section of the Press, a discouragement for which there is not and never has been any justification in the facts of the military situation, but a discouragement the persistence of which is at the moment perhaps the principal source of peril to the future of this country.



To the examination of the causes of this discouragement and to the demonstration of its utter absence of legitimate ground we will next proceed.

## PART III

CAN WE WIN?



# I

## THE MOOD OF PESSIMISM

THE mood of depression of which I have spoken neither has nor ever had any relation to the facts of the military position. This is proved conclusively by the fact that the ups and downs of the national spirits in no way follow the ups and downs of the fortunes of war. As I have already said, the moment of time when the fortunes of the Allies were at the darkest—when the peril of Europe was really imminent and ghastly, and was recognised as such by the responsible military authorities—the moment when a wise man might have been pardoned if in his heart he despaired of the future, was the moment immediately following the fall of Namur. But at that moment there was practically no pessimism discoverable among the gen-



eral public. The head of a great newspaper trust did indeed, during the retreat from Mons, make one attempt to excite panic by a disgraceful piece of sensationalism; but his crime (for it was little less than that) met with none of the partial success which has unfortunately attended some later efforts of his in the same direction. On the other hand the pessimistic mood was never more general than at the end of the great and successful Russian retirement of last autumn, when the enemy having failed in spite of his superiority in munitionment to destroy the forces opposed to him, was finally obliged to accept the situation, which he had above all things desired to avoid—that of being pinned down on both decisive fronts, with the alternative of breaking through somewhere by a desperate and final effort (a feat which must become more difficult with every week that passes), or making up his mind, if the Allies persisted and held together, to ultimate and crushing defeat.

But if the pessimistic outlook which has undoubtedly from time to time afflicted certain sections of civilian opinion in this

country, does not arise from any intelligent consideration of the actual course of the war, from what does it arise? It is worth while devoting a little space to the analysis of the matter, because it is upon the prevalence of this outlook (which he doubtless exaggerates, and is led to exaggerate by the disproportionate prominence given to it in certain sections of our Press) that the enemy is now primarily calculating in his efforts to secure an inconclusive peace. It may not unsuitably be considered under two heads, taking first the general psychological causes, which are calculated to produce such an effect upon the minds and imagination of men whose judgment is uninstructed in such matters, and second the particular causes, which in the present case tend to aggravate the evil.

Among the factors which make for discouragement—or perhaps one should rather say make for the state of mind in which discouragement can get a foothold—is the mere fact of the prolongation of the war. Here the connection formed in the mind is on the face of it wholly irrational. Obviously there is nothing in the mere

delay of a decision which could of itself logically lead to an increasing fear of defeat, or even to an increasing doubt of the possibility of ultimate victory. Indeed in the particular case under consideration mere reason would tend to the opposite conclusion. The longer the war endures the greater are the chances that victory will ultimately be achieved by the side which has the greatest reserve of resources in men and materials to draw upon; and I suppose that no one who has considered the question even superficially can have the smallest doubt that the reserves in both respects, but especially in the matter of men, which can ultimately be utilised by the Allies, are far greater than those at the disposal of the Germanic Powers. It was, of course, Prussia which counted on a rapid decision and a speedy victory; it was the Prussian hopes that were rationally diminished if not destroyed, by the prospect of a long war. "France can afford to wait," said the German Chancellor in his first speech to the Reichstag, in justification of the violation of Belgian rights, "we cannot."

Bernhardi in his very interesting military works written before the war had repeatedly said the same thing.

Nevertheless, to the civilian mind, there does seem in some odd way a connection between delay in the achievement of any decision and fear that the decision may be unfavourable, or—what is from the rational point of view much more untenable—doubt as to whether a decision can ever be reached.

The fact is, that this is not fundamentally a matter of reason at all, but purely a matter of the nerves and the imagination. It occurs—as every trainer of athletes knows—in all sorts of less important contests. It is a dangerous reaction consequent on overstrain. No man and no nation need be in the smallest degree ashamed of being assailed by it. But for the man or the nation which succumbs to it, it invariably spells disaster.

To this purely emotional factor must be added a factor which depends rather upon ill-instructed judgment. The mind, and still more the imagination, of a civilian population, would probably always—even



if it were not deliberately misled as it has been on the subject—be affected to some extent by the mere accident that the fighting is at present taking place almost entirely on soil previously belonging to one or other of the allied powers, instead of on the soil of the enemy. From the military point of view this is, of course, a matter of complete indifference. Other things being equal you are in no way more likely to suffer an adverse military decision within your own borders than within those of your enemies; and in war—so long as it is really war and not politics—a favourable or adverse military decision is the only thing that counts. The aim of each party is to destroy the effective armed force of the other. A retreat involving the abandonment of a whole country may be the first step towards that end, as it was with Wellington in the campaign of the peninsula. An advance ending in the capture of the enemy's capital may end in the destruction of the military force of the invading, as it was in the case of Napoleon's Russian campaign. The fact that the German forces are in Belgium, Poland,

Northern France, and Serbia, means of itself absolutely nothing from the military point of view. If we are foolish enough to bargain with them, they will no doubt use their temporary occupation of these regions as an asset wherewith to bargain. But no power can be said to have "conquered" any territory whatsoever, until by the ratification of peace in its favour its possession is no longer disputed by arms. Such a peace cannot be concluded until one of two things occurs. Either those who are disposed to resist such conquests are disarmed and unable to continue the struggle, or they deliberately abandon the struggle. The former might always conceivably happen, for prophecy in war is always impossible; but the chances of it happening diminish every day, and are now almost negligible. The latter will happen only if we are either fooled or betrayed.

It may seem to many that in thus summarising the things that make for discouragement and for a secret longing for peace, I have left out the most enormous of all. Assuredly there was never

in the history of the world a war of which John Bright's words about the Angel of Death could be more truly spoken. This country in particular has never in recorded time been asked for so awful a tribute of blood and tears. The matter is so terrible and so close to what is deepest in us all that one dare not write of it lest some word should fall awry or some phrase ring false. As Gambetta said of Alsace-Lorraine : " Let us think of it always, let us speak of it never." But it must not be thought that those of us who are most loath to speak of it are less conscious of its unspeakable tragedy than those who at any moment can glibly exploit that tragedy, whether in the interests of mere journalistic sensationalism, or of Pacifist treason.

If I do not set down the horrors of the slaughter and the bereavement of a million homes among the natural causes of discouragement, it is simply because I know that it does not, in fact, tend to produce such discouragement. Assuredly it does not tend to produce a mood favourable to a shameful peace. Our brother's blood—the blood of armed men dead on the field

of honour, the blood of the unarmed, of women and little children, murdered by treachery—cries aloud to us; but it does not cry for peace. It cries for vengeance—to Heaven and to us. And it will be found that those whom sorrow has most deeply wounded will be the most resolute to say of the fallen soldiers: “It shall not be said that they died for nothing,” and of the murdered victims: “It shall not be said they died unavenged.”



## II

### THE GERMAN LEGEND

IN addition to the general causes which might, in any war so prolonged as this, have tended to favour a mood of discouragement among unthinking people to whom the real conditions of military victory and defeat are unknown, there are, in the present instance, certain special causes which tend to emphasise that mood. Of these, perhaps the most ultimately important is the tradition of something superior in the barbaric (or as they are sometimes called "Teutonic") outlands of Europe, whether that sense of superiority takes the form of admiration or of fear. That tradition was thoroughly grafted upon the middle class of this country—it does not exist among the populace nor among that section of the

governing class which is well acquainted with Europe—by half a century of hypnotic suggestion by the academies, and by a long succession of eminent English writers. It has not yet been completely destroyed.

It is true that the legend of the generous, pious, and duty-loving Teuton, enforced so often by Carlyle and Kingsley and a score of lesser men, could hardly survive the Belgian abominations, the horrors of Wittenberg, the crucifixion of our soldiers, and the murder of Nurse Cavell. The part of the legend which attributed moral superiority to the barbarian is, thank God, dead, killed by the first revelation of what such barbarism really means and must always mean.

But the other part of the legend, the tradition of something mysteriously powerful and "efficient" in the Germans, still survives, and it is an important factor in the creation of a vague doubt as to the possibility of complete victory. It expresses itself mainly in the form of a subconscious belief that the German is "unconquerable"—an expression to

which no military meaning can be attached. And its effect upon many minds is to induce the conclusion that the best that we can hope for is some settlement which will place a certain check upon his future aggression. It is assumed that his natural strength—material and moral—is so great as to make the idea of obliterating his power fantastic and incredible.

As in the former cases to which I have alluded, this sense of hopelessness in the presence of the German bears no relation to historic or military fact. Originally, merely an academic fad, supported by gross perversions of history, it owed such confirmation as it received from the general opinion to the issue of the war of 1870. But that war proved nothing more than that the Prussians had succeeded (by means of a forgery) in catching France at a disadvantage. The French had outmatched them before, and were destined to outmatch them again. The failure of civilised Europe to come to the help of France, fighting single-handed against the barbarians, was a blunder, a tragedy, perhaps a betrayal, but it was certainly

not a demonstration of German superiority.

Nor is there anything at all in the events of this war to suggest such superiority. Prussia, as I have already pointed out, had, at the opening of the war, one very solid and easily recognisable advantage. She knew exactly at what moment her long-premeditated crime was to be attempted. The Allies, being innocent of aggressive intentions, could not know this. Consequently Prussia and her vassals were ahead of the Allies in preparation for a war already designed to take place at a particular hour by some two years at least, and were ahead of them in their mobilisation of the resources so carefully collected by at least a week. Further, the German school of military thought proved happy in its guess as to the impossibility of maintaining the modern ring fortress in the face of modern heavy artillery directed by modern aircraft. Also, Germany—or rather Austria—acting upon this just view of the situation, had set herself to manufacture on a very great scale guns of unprecedented



calibre designed for this special purpose. For all this let the Germanic Powers have such credit for "efficiency" as may be their due. At that point the claim of Prussianised Germany to have shown a special degree of "efficiency" or to have exhibited a natural strength superior to that of other European nations begins and ends.

Prussia started the war after two years of careful preparation with a great superiority in initial numbers, and an enormous superiority in initial equipment. Every success of any kind which she has gained up to the present has been due to one or other of these initial advantages. Not in a single case has such success been due to superior intelligence. Indeed the lesson of almost every episode of the great war is that the inferiority in intelligence of the German, and especially of the North German, to the more civilised nations (including Russia) against whom his blow was aimed, is still what it has always been in recorded history.

Take first the subjects to which he has, with tremendous industry and concentra-

tion and elaborate attention to detail, applied such brains as he possesses—military preparation and military strategy.

In the former matter, depending mainly on detailed imitation, docile labour, machinery, and expenditure, the Germans could do fairly well without working miracles in the course of the long years which they devoted to building up a machine which they believed would, of its own weight, destroy anything that could be brought against it. But even in this department—contrary to the accepted belief in this country—there has been little or no sign of inventiveness or activity of mind. It is notable that even for the great howitzers, to which so many of the early triumphs of the enemy were due, Prussia, in the first instance, was largely dependent on her more civilised Ally, Austria. For the rest, in the matter of manufacture and provision of guns, munitions, aircraft, and the rest, France, which was far less well supplied at the beginning of the war, far inferior in mineral resources, and which had, moreover, her richest industrial areas occupied by the

enemy since the first weeks of the war, and this country, which, except in the matter of the navy, had made no preparations at all, and which was further hampered by the bad and discredited political system which she had suffered to grow more impotent and corrupt year by year, have something more than caught up Prussia on her own strongest chosen ground. In the matter of the application, the new mechanical forces—in airmanship for instance, in naval gunnery, and in field artillery work—matters which require alertness of mind and intelligent initiative, the Prussian is and always has been out-classed by both French and English.

Turning to the strategy we find the case against the superstition of German superiority even clearer. The one definite success in this department which stands to the credit of Prussia is Hindenburg's defeat of the Russian army among the Masurian Lakes. That great and very decisive victory was due to a careful investigation of the complex physical and geographical conditions prevailing in the

district made by the Prussian General before the war. For this Hindenburg deserves full credit; but nobody would pretend that such close application to detail was not a function of which the German mind is capable and for which indeed it is in some respects peculiarly fitted. And here, as in the West, the Prussian had the basic advantage of knowing that the war was coming and when it was coming, because he had himself planned it beforehand. If we would form a fair estimate of the military capacity of the enemy, we must judge him by those unforeseen developments which require rapidity and soundness of judgment, and are therefore the test of any command.

Judged by such a test the Prussian military command cannot be said, if the war is considered as a whole, to come off brilliantly. At the Marne, though in greatly superior force, they were defeated by superior strategy. After the Marne, they failed to seize the importance of keeping the control of the Channel ports, which were then open to them, and they allowed the Allies to win the race to the sea. Then,



after a series of expensive failures against Ypres, came the much advertised "march on Calais"—an unsuccessful and enormously costly attempt to do what they could have done almost certainly in the first instance if they had been more alert, and that at a time when it would have been of very much greater value to them. After that we had the six efforts to capture and put out of action at least part of the Russian army—all barren in spite of the advantage given by our Allies' lack of munitionment. That almost ends the real military record of the Germanic Powers under Prussian leadership. The rest is almost wholly spectacular, and even as a spectacle it must be pronounced a failure.

If this be a fair picture of Prussian intelligence, even when applied to its own chosen speciality, the preparation for and conduct of war, it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the imbecilities which have marked Prussian policy in other directions. When it was a matter of vital importance to Prussia to secure the neutrality of England—a thing only too shamefully

possible if the cards had been properly played—the Prussian Government took none of the steps which they might have taken to achieve that end, but seem simply to have trusted to the grotesque reports of their amateur spies, and to the fact that “Morel” and men of his kidney had succeeded in starting a thing called the “Anglo-German Friendship Society,” and in getting a number of innocent and more or less distinguished persons to join it—as if, in a country like ours, such measure of success could not be achieved on behalf of any folly in peaceful times! To the same calibre of judgment belongs the illusion that the French (who, of all the Allies, are the most determined that Germany shall not exist after the war) could be tempted to treason and surrender by clumsy barbarian flattery proceeding from men whom they alone in Europe had really known and therefore hated for forty years, the idea that the national spirit of England could be cowed by the bombardment of fashionable watering-places and the dropping of bombs at random among the civilian population, and the hysterical

alternations of terrorist boasting and pathetic appeal by which it has been thought possible to influence neutral opinion.

No, the German is docile and painstaking, but he is not clever. The common quality which unites all the Germanic peoples is stupidity; and of this quality their Prussian rulers have a full share.

### III

#### THE MANUFACTURE OF PANIC

SUCH are the natural conditions which make possible a mood of pessimism wholly unrelated by any reasoned and impartial judgment on the facts. But it may safely be said that the common sense of the nation would have rejected all temptation to utterly irrational depression if those temptations had not been deliberately forced upon it, and the consequent depression stimulated and exploited by a section of the Press, or if, alternatively, general opinion had been properly instructed and guided by those whose province it was to supply such instruction and such guidance.

From almost the beginning of the war, and with increasing violence as any substratum of truth diminished, that large



part of our Press which is controlled by a single man, one Alfred Harmsworth, subsequently (and very comically) created Lord Northcliffe of the Isle of Thanet, has set itself deliberately to create a mood of disappointment if not of panic.

I need not recapitulate the whole story, with which everyone in England is tolerably familiar. It began very early with the retreat from Mons, when at the most critical moment a correspondent of one of these sheets sent in an extravagant communication based upon the exaggerated emotions of some few stragglers and run-aways, indicating that the British army had been cut to pieces. That scandalous report was allowed to be published, and the politician who expressly permitted the outrage is still a member of the Government.

Later, when the heavy fighting began in the spring of 1915, and when it was of special and obvious importance from the point of view of patriotism to calm and steady public feeling in view of the inevitably severe losses which would have to be borne, another of these papers covered the

country with posters, shouting the abominable message : " Huge casualties ! "

Next came the affair of the shells. Owing to the wholly unexpected conversion of the campaign into an affair of trench warfare—a development quite certainly as little foreseen by the enemy as by ourselves—and owing also to the discovery that in such warfare the rate of expenditure in high explosive shells was far greater than military opinion—whether German, French, or English—had anticipated, we and our Allies found ourselves caught short in the supply of such shells. The enemy certainly foresaw the conditions as little as we, but the fact that he had for two years accumulated high explosives for a totally different purpose—that of reducing fortresses—gave him a temporary advantage in this very important department of warfare. This advantage, as soon as it was discovered, we and our Allies set ourselves at once to redress. But while this process was going on and the course of our production was steadily rising, the same Alfred Harmsworth learned—presumably from a politician who

while a member of the Cabinet had acted as his servant—of the temporary deficit, and also of the fact that it was being remedied. He immediately raised an incredibly ignorant (or mendacious) outcry which he coupled with an attack upon the soldier responsible for the military department of the war. He succeeded in getting his servant in the Cabinet appointed to the new “Ministry of Munitions.” But when the figures are published it will be found that the activities of that Minister had no effect whatever upon the output of shells, which had been steadily and rapidly increasing before his appointment, and would go on steadily and rapidly increasing if he were sacked to-morrow. All that the appointment did was to hamper slightly the work that was being done by the soldiers on account of the extreme dislike and distrust felt of that particular politician by the working-classes, upon whose whole-hearted loyalty and readiness to make serious sacrifices the continuous and adequate supply obviously depended.

I need not complete the whole miserable story. We all know how, out of spite

against the soldier who had refused to allow him to meddle in matters of which he knew nothing, Harmsworth refused to print appeals for recruits. We all know of the absurd "map of Europe" (eagerly reprinted in the German papers) intended to impress upon the public a sense of the overwhelming triumph of our enemies, of the absurd calculations of German strength framed by Mr McCabe, the ex-Franciscan friar, who promulgated his authoritative opinion that the Germans could put twenty-five per cent of their population (including women and infants in arms) into the field against us. To men of intelligence such things are contemptible. But they have their effect.

In any other belligerent country, whether of our Allies or of our enemies, a man who had thus behaved would assuredly have been treated in a very drastic fashion. His papers would have been suppressed, and he himself, perhaps, put under restraint. The English Government did not thus act, and it is not necessary to enter into the variety of reasons (many of them by no means



creditable) which may probably have restrained its action. Ultimately the reason is to be found in the fact that before the war the British Government had sunk into a condition which forbade to it the exercise of that moral authority without which any Government, if defied by a powerful individual or group of individuals, is impotent. Our otherwise incredible blundering over the Irish question can be explained in the same fashion and in no other. It is deplorable but it is true.

What, however, needs further emphasis is this, that even without proceeding to extremities against Harmsworth and men of his kidney, the Government might have at least given to the nation a corrective in the form of a sober and reasoned official estimate of the military situation. An "official" communication of any sort always carries with it no inconsiderable weight, and that weight would be greatly increased if such a communication in contrast to the mere appeals to emotion and the vague association of ideas which constitute the whole stock-in-trade of the journals whose in-

fluence it was desired to undermine, offered, as it could easily offer without divulging any information which could help the enemy, specific and convincing reasons for its interpretation of the facts.

The Government cannot plead that it has not been shown the way. Our French Allies publish such summaries at regular intervals. They are written with the utmost sobriety; checks and reverses are admitted, and successes are never exaggerated, often they are deliberately underrated. But the effect is to keep French opinion in a state of cool and vigilant confidence, which is the best possible mood in which to conduct war.

Let me take a specific instance of the contrast between the two methods. In the early months of the present year the Prussian Government published a summary of its casualties up to the end of January, 1916. That summary was a grotesque falsification of the truth, and was recognised as such by military opinion throughout Europe. It was at once shown to be inconsistent not only with all human probability, but with the other statements

published by the Prussian Government itself, as well as with the many sectional lists published in Germany. The Prussian military staff knew as well as or even better than the military authorities in France and England that this estimate was nonsense. Yet when Mr Tennant was asked in the House of Commons whether he had any information as to the German losses, he got up and reeled off the patently absurd German "official" figures, which were, of course, at once taken up by the panic Press in this country, and presenting them as the "official" (British "official," be it observed this time) estimate of the amount of damage that the enemy had suffered. The deduction obviously was that the enemy was still possessed of reserves of man-power which might well suffice for another two or three years of war—exactly, of course, what Prussia desired us to believe, since it might be a powerful persuasive to a premature peace.

Of course, eventually, not only the Government but the panic Press itself—at any rate in those organs which are supposed to appeal to a fairly educated public

—had to acknowledge that the “estimate” was a pure concoction patently inconsistent with known facts. But what was there to prevent Mr Tennant from making this clear in the first instance? The military staff could unquestionably have supplied him with information which would have shown beyond dispute that the hypothesis that the figures were reliable involved the raising to life of at least one hundred thousand Germans admitted to have been previously dead, to say nothing of the assumption that the Germans had killed or put out of action two men for every one disposed of by the Western Allies—a supposition notoriously the opposite of the truth. Had the publication of the Prussian figures been accompanied by only a few lines of the most obvious criticism, their publication could have done nothing but good, for it would have discredited in advance other falsehoods of the same kind circulated by Prussia with the object of influencing neutral opinion and uninstructed civilian opinion in the countries at war with Germany, and especially in England. As it was the lie had the



start, and to-day, even though those who fathered it repudiate it, there are many who are in some vague fashion persuaded that the German losses have been more or less "exaggerated" by those professional soldiers who have no axe to grind in the matter, no aim but to estimate them accurately, and whose judgment is virtually unanimous.

Now, naturally, I have not at my disposal the facts and figures which are known to the military authorities who have formed this judgment. I accept it, firstly because it is the unanimous judgment formed upon separate but converging lines of investigation of men who know what I cannot know, and secondly because it is in itself consonant with probability. The broad outlines of the argument by which it can be shown, not that victory is certain—for that it can never be until it is actually achieved—but that it is increasingly probable, and that every day that passes without a decision leaves us in a better position and the enemy in a worse position than before is an outline apparent to me as an ordinary man, and one which, I believe,

can be made apparent to other ordinary men if it can be put before them plainly. The Government ought so to put it before them. Since it does not do so, I, ill-qualified as I am, must venture on the attempt.

## IV

### THE FACTS

WAR results from a conflict of will between two sovereign states. Each state attempts to impose its will upon the other; the successful imposition of such will is victory. The failure to impose it and the consequent acceptance of the opposing will is defeat.

Victory is achieved when one party has disarmed the other, and is in consequence in a position to impose its will without further resistance. Victory is always possible to one side or the other in any war. There is no such thing in war as stale mate, for in war men on both sides are continually put out of action by death, disablement, capture, or the destruction of their cohesion, and this must always, if sufficiently prolonged, result in one side or the other being rendered incapable of

further resistance. There can, therefore, never be a war in which an ultimate decision (or victory) is impossible. What is always possible and has often happened is that both sides, while each has still a chance of victory, may decide that the chance is not worth the cost involved in the continuation of the struggle, and in consequence both may consent to a compromise, that is, to a settlement which does not completely fulfil the will of either. Where the opposition of wills is fundamental such a compromise is rarely, if ever, anything but a truce.

I have already indicated and shall set out more fully hereafter the reasons which lead me to believe that such a compromise would, for the Allies and especially for Great Britain, be a disaster. But what I am at present concerned to show is that such a compromise is in no way the *natural* termination of this war; that its natural termination is a *victory* for either one side or the other, that is to say, the reduction of one party to a position in which, its power of resistance being lost, it must needs accept the imposition of the



will of its opponent; and further, that all indications point to the probability—certainty in such matters there cannot be—that if the war is fought to a finish the Allies will be in a position to impose their will on the Germanic Powers.

I have already pointed out the absurdity of judging of military affairs by the mere position of armies on the map. Let us try, from the purely military point of view, to define the present position of the combatants that we may estimate their reasonable chances of success. It is hardly necessary to emphasise the fact that from that point of view of whether the ultimate decision is obtained on allied territory or enemy positions is rather less important than that of whether it is obtained on clay or gravel soil.

As has already been said, the Prussians, in accordance with their preconceived plan, began the campaign with an effort designed to inflict upon the Western Powers such a defeat as might effectively render them incapable of further resistance. They nearly succeeded. In fact they failed. They were defeated on the Marne,

forced to retreat, and pinned to a line of trenches which eventually came to extend from the Swiss frontier to the sea. After a series of singularly ill-concerted and wholly unsuccessful efforts to accomplish their original purpose of breaking the line of the Allies in the West, they turned to the East and attempted with the aid of their greatly superior munitionment to destroy the Russian armies in the East. They made six successive attempts to achieve this object, and in every case they failed. In the end a line was established in the East as in the West containing the German forces as a besieged garrison. That is their position to-day. In order to demonstrate its seriousness from their point of view, it is not necessary to quote English or French or Russian authorities. One needs but to quote General von Bernhardt, who warned his fellow-countrymen that such was exactly the position which they must at all costs avoid since it would almost inevitably imply defeat. To-day they do find themselves in exactly that position, and to-day are in that sense already undergoing defeat.

To bring the issue down to matters more calculable, what is the German position? They hold two long lines, one in the West and one in the East, which can be held only because their flanks rest upon impenetrable obstacles—neutral territory or the sea. They can be held only so long as there are enough men to hold them. The German population is a limited quantity, and ultimately the number of available men must become too few to hold them (for whatever may be said about the “strength of the modern defence,” no one can pretend that there is not *some* minimum required for that purpose) unless in the meantime the Allies exhaust their own resources in man-power before those of their enemies are exhausted, or the Germans achieve a decision against the Allies which will put out of action so considerable a part of the latter’s forces as may redress the balance in favour of the Germanic Powers. There is no fourth alternative.

Now no man not hopelessly ignorant of the facts can pretend that the German forces are not as things stand in greater

danger of exhaustion from the point of view of man-power than those of the Allies. The rate of wastage on both sides is unprecedentedly high, but it is certainly not now higher for the Allies than for the Germans. As a fact, owing to the method of attack adopted by the enemy and the fact that he is so situated as to be compelled to a continual offensive, it is lower; but I will not insist upon that. Let us assume the two to be equal. The German and Austrian Empires are putting their last men out into the field. They cannot increase. Of the Allies, France alone has reached anything like the same condition. Great Britain, Russia, and Italy have all three great reserves of unused men available as soon as they can be trained and armed—some of them available as soon as they are wanted. Add to this the fact that Great Britain holds the seas, and that her blockade—now at long last made really effective—must increasingly embarrass the enemy in the matter of munitionment, if not of food, and it is a mere matter of arithmetic that if the war proceeds by exhaustion the Germanic



Powers must be the first exhausted, and can therefore be compelled to accept such terms as the Allies may dictate.

There remains the possibility that the Germans may obtain against one or other of the Allies a decision which will turn the scale in their favour. This is a possibility. It cannot, like the "stale mate" delusion, be proved mathematically to be rubbish. Indeed if it were not possible we could say that Prussia was not only in process of defeat, but already actually defeated. But, though possible, such an issue becomes less and less probable every day.

This is not, as I say, a matter of demonstration, but it is a matter of reasonable argument. The considerations which lead one to such a conclusion are based not upon vague hopes, still less upon the unutterably foolish idea that victory is made the more likely by taking it for granted, but upon facts and a rational process of judgment.

At the beginning of the war the enemy attempted to obtain a decision against the Western Allies at a time when his forces

outnumbered theirs by nearly two to one, and his munitionment in an even higher proportion. He failed at the Marne, and was forced to retreat. He *may* succeed in a new attempt now that the French and British forces are numerically stronger than his and their munitionment at least equally effective; but it must be admitted that it would strike one as a rather curious paradox if he did.

Again, last year he tried to envelop and destroy the Russian armies when those armies were short of munitions, of explosives, of powder, even of rifles; and he brought to bear on them in that condition an enormous accumulation of such resources carefully collected over several months for the purpose. Once more he failed, and the Russians escaped with their potential power intact. He *may* succeed when the thaw is over and fighting on a large scale begins again on the Eastern front. But since our Allies have had the opportunity of replenishing themselves with munitions and fully arming new contingents, it is not clear why he should be able to do now what he could not do then.

Other arguments can be advanced tending to the same conclusion—arguments more general but perhaps not less convincing to the lay mind.

As the war approaches its final phase the actions of the enemy become less military and more purely theatrical. His proclamations and announcements become more and more patently divorced from reality.

Take the single case of the assault on the sector of Verdun—but one example among many. That assault may have had—probably did have in the first instance—a legitimate military object, the cutting off and disarmament of the French forces east of the Meuse. But the attack has been continued, long after this specific object had become altogether unattainable, at the expense of stupendous losses such as nothing that the offensive could now possibly achieve would justify.

And along with this persistence in what seemed and seems, from the military point of view, mere stupidity, went a series of pronouncements issuing from the Prussian Government and the Press which it in-

spires and controls, all wildly absurd and each violently contradictory of the last. First the little dismantled fort of Duau-mont—an outpost of the old and now obsolete and abandoned fortifications of Verdun which was given up to the Prus-sians in the first stage of the battle—was “the strongest fortress of our chief enemy.” Then Verdun itself—situated not twenty miles over the frontier—became “the heart of France” and the place where “peace would be dictated.” When Verdun did not fall it was suddenly announced that its capture had never been contemplated, and that the only object of the repeated attack was to “weaken the enemy”—by disabling one of his men at the cost of from three to five of their own. This seems to have been a little too crude even for German stomachs, and so, after rather more than a fortnight’s delay, came more furious assaults and more rubbishy proclamations.

No nation, not even Prussia, acts and talks so, unless desperate.

But the final and conclusive proof that Prussia is losing is to be found in the



strange phenomenon already noted, the sudden conversion of the heirs and disciples of Frederick II. to humanitarian Pacifism. While Prussia thought herself victorious she talked of nothing but blood and iron. Now that she talks—clumsily enough, no doubt—of peace and brotherly love and respect for the rights of nationality, we may draw the secure deduction that whatever may be the case with the inchoate and barbarous mass she governs, her rulers, at least, no longer think her victorious.

“The devil was sick; the devil a monk would be. The devil got well!” That proverb also has a moral for these times.

## PART IV

### A SUICIDE PEACE



# I

## THROUGH GERMAN EYES

IN the foregoing sections I have attempted a rough estimate of the military situation, and have reached the conclusion that in all human probability the Allies can completely defeat—that is to say disarm and impose any terms they choose upon—Prussia, if they continue to fight and refuse to listen to any talk of negotiation. The sole remaining question is as to whether such a result is worth the unquestionable further sacrifice of life and wealth which its accomplishment will involve. And the only rational way of facing that question is to ask : What will be the effect if the Allies do *not* press their present advantage to such a natural and logical conclusion, but are content to conclude a peace which would leave the Prussian



Empire checked indeed in respect of its immediate hopes of universal dominion, but still formidable and capable of further aggression at a later date? What especially would be the effect upon this country of such a peace?

In order to answer that question the first point to consider is what would be the effect of such a peace upon the psychology of the Germans themselves—that is upon the human material which Prussia is using and may again use for its own purposes.

I do not think it necessary to debate at length the question of whether there are in the Germanies any materials capable, in certain circumstances, of revolt against what may be called “Prussianism.” Personally, I am somewhat sceptical about their potency. I agree that, if Prussia could be cut out, the Germanic peoples, now so docile in their acceptance of Prussian control, might accept with little difficulty the control of some more civilised power. But I doubt very much whether under any circumstances the Germans themselves will move against their rulers. In my Socialist days I attended Interna-

tional Congresses and heard the speeches of German Socialists, and, even before the outbreak of war made it clear that at least half the Socialist deputies were and always had been in the service of Potsdam, I had excellent reason to question the assumption that a Social Democratic Republic with its centre in Berlin would be a whit less aggressive, less contemptuous, less convinced that it was the destiny of the "Teuton" to impose his "higher civilisation" upon the world, than the Hohenzollern dynasty itself. But that is not the question which at the moment I desire to argue. The moral which I wish to enforce and which can, I think, be proved to absolute demonstration is that any possible chance of creating a pacific or non-aggressive Germany will be utterly destroyed unless Germany is subjected to so frightful a punishment as shall make it clear even to Germans that widespread devastation and abject humiliation were the fruits of Prussian leadership.

The contrary view seems to me to be based upon a confusion between what *we* know to be true and what the Germans

will be told to believe and will believe to be true. In one sense it is no doubt true that even an inconclusive peace would be a German defeat. The original objective of the war, from the Prussian point of view—an acknowledged German hegemony of Europe with the Prussian dynasty at its head—is defeated, or at least delayed for an indefinite period. But that is not how the matter will be put to the Germanic population subject to Prussian rule. We have already had plenty of samples of the sort of thing which those populations have been asked to swallow, and apparently do swallow. People who will accept from their rulers the statement that Scarborough is a great fortress, that Verdun (not twenty miles over the frontier) is “the heart of France,” or alternatively (when repeated assaults accompanied by an enormous and utterly fruitless expenditure of life and completely failed) that it was never intended to take it, that the surrender of a small and isolated garrison in a remote part of Mesopotamia is “the greatest military blow that has ever fallen upon England” and all the rest of the

nonsense, are not likely to reject the very much more plausible case that will be put up to them by their rulers should the war end in any sort of compromise between victory and defeat.

It is worth while to eliminate all that we may happen to recognise as absurd in that case, and try to present it as it will be stated by the Prussian rulers of Germany, and as it will probably appear reasonable to the German peoples.

So stated it would run something like this : " Germany had by the native superiority which belongs to the Teutonic race attained such a position in Europe as moved the envy of her barbaric or decadent neighbours. Actuated by such envy these neighbours combined against her, thinking her an easy prey. She was suddenly confronted by a huge confederation of inferior peoples to the East and to the West, the final blow being struck at her by treacherous England which, though a Teutonic nation and owing all her past achievements to her heritage of blood from Germany, yet with the basest faithlessness and ingratitude, joined the savage



Slav and the decadent Latin against her cousins across the North Sea, thus placing her naval power—a Teutonic speciality—at the disposal of the infamous coalition. Had Germany been divided, or had she lacked a very strong central authority, she must have succumbed under such a universal assault. But, thanks to Prussia and the Hohenzollerns, who had organised her native powers and resources as they had never been organised before, she was able not only to repel her enemies, but to invade and occupy their territories, while her own fatherland remained practically secure against the foreigner.

“ She might have achieved that full and recognised supremacy which is the just meed of her native superiority but for the treason of England. But England—though infected and decadent—was still able to control the seas, and this fact made a temporary compromise necessary. The fact remains that while Belgium, Northern France, Poland, a great deal of Russia, Serbia and Montenegro have been subjugated by the German armies, the foreigner has been almost entirely kept off

German soil. And the final proof of our triumph is that our enemies, with every advantage in their favour, have not dared to push the war beyond the point of securing a dubious and temporary restitution—which we should probably have made in any case—of some of their own territories which our armies had conquered.”

That will be the Hohenzollern case in Germany after the war if the Allies are insane enough to acquiesce in any peace which can be twisted into supporting such a case. Of course, it is rubbish. It is easy to prove that there never was any conspiracy against Germany, though there was an easily demonstrable conspiracy of Germany against her rivals. It is also easy to prove that Germany (that is to say Prussia and her vassals) started the war with an enormous visible handicap, and with the full expectation of immediate victory. But that is not the point. The point is whether those who swallowed the absurdities already quoted in regard to Verdun and Kut would swallow this also. It seems to me obvious that they would.

Assuming that they did swallow it, it

remains to be asked what deductions they would draw from it. These deductions seem clear enough and may be arranged as follows :

(1) Stick to Prussia and the Hohenzollerns. They alone saved you from being overwhelmed by your enemies. Just as in the first instance they turned Germany from a geographical expression into a nation, so they have shown their capacity to maintain that national unit against the armed force of all Europe. Anything that even in the smallest degree tends to weaken their authority will expose Germany to a repetition of the peril which has been so narrowly escaped.

(2) The "militarism" with which we have been reproached has proved the single safeguard of our national existence. If any criticism is offered in regard to it, it must be that it has not carried far enough. Warned by the peril in which we have been placed, we must extend both the powers and the resources at the disposal of the General Staff at Berlin. Most especially must we add largely to our Navy, *for it was solely on account of her*

*naval supremacy that treacherous England was able to rob us of complete victory.*

Next time we must make sure that our fleet shall be at least equal to hers. With a very little further sacrifice we ought to be able to make it unquestionably superior.

(3) The factor which prevented us from achieving complete victory was the treacherous intervention of England against us. But for that we should not only have overrun both France and Russia, but should have been able to hold our conquests. We ought therefore to make sure that England shall not be such a factor in the next war. We tried to do this in the case of the present war by courting England—through our diplomacy and through associations like “Morel’s” Anglo-German Friendship Society—with a view to inducing her to remain neutral until we had disposed of our Continental rivals, after which she could choose between fighting us single-handed and accepting an alliance with us on the basis of her permanent and assumed inferiority. Her treachery wrecked this excellent scheme. We must now adopt the opposite expedient and get England



out of the way before we again challenge Europe. The immediate objective of our policy must therefore now be, on the diplomatic side, the isolation of England, and on the side of war preparations the construction of a fleet sufficiently powerful to make our success in war against England thus isolated speedy and secure.

I wish again to emphasise that in putting forward these conclusions as I conceive the German mind would receive them I am fully conscious of the folly and ignorance implied by their acceptance. But I am not submitting them to intelligent and civilised men and women such as I may reasonably suppose my readers to be. I am postulating them as likely to be accepted by the largely barbaric and very stupid peoples who inhabit the existing German Empire, to most of whom their absurd premises appear self-evident, and who will naturally be eager to accept conclusions so consonant at once with their traditions and their desires. Looking at the matter in that light I think it must be admitted that the reasoning as given above is plausible, and to Germans, saturated

with a century of consistent self-praise, I have little doubt that it would be found convincing.

I believe then that if the end of this war should leave the present German Empire in being, though checked of some of its ambitions, and even though shorn of some of the outlying and alien territory, we need look for no change in the attitude of the Germanic peoples, and therefore no lessening of the permanent dangers to the peace and good order of Europe which that attitude necessarily involves. Prussia will remain arrogant, and the Germanies will remain servile. They will still be the ready and obedient instruments of her will, and that will still be what Nietzsche called "the Will to Power." As to material resources the complete incorporation of at least the Germanic parts of the Austrian Empire which would certainly follow such an insecure and unnatural settlement as we have been contemplating, would, perhaps, more than compensate Berlin in the long run for the loss of Alsace and Posen.

Certain new elements or modifications

we may indeed confidently expect to see appear in the psychology of the German peoples and their rulers as a result of the war, should it end inconclusively. And it is just these elements or modifications which, so far as this country is concerned, convert the probability of future disaster into a virtual certainty. They may be summarily stated under two heads.

Firstly, the fact that by hypothesis the war has ended in an escape rather than in a victory, so that it would not be possible to represent it even to the Germans as a repetition of 1870, will make it essential for Prussia if she is to retain her supremacy and confirm her legend to represent the truce as a mere breathing space to be followed in no long time by new and more glorious adventures. I have already said—and it cannot be said too often—that it is the very principle of Prussia's vitality that she should continually encroach upon the rights of her neighbours. Aggression is the law of her being, and always must be so long as she is Prussian. But the situation which an inconclusive peace would create would give to this general

and enduring necessity a particular urgency.

It would also give—and here comes the second and for us most dangerous element—it a particular direction. The failure of Germany to secure full and unqualified victory will assuredly be attributed to British “treachery,” and especially to the hampering effect of British sea power. Prussia has already begun to strike this note as if in anticipation. It appears in the last German reply to President Wilson, where this country is accused of “inhumanity” in starving the civilian population of Germany in order that her “victorious armies” may be forced to accept an “ignominious capitulation.” We may be sure that this will be said with increasing iteration and emphasis, as the Prussian rulers are reduced to the necessity of explaining to the German peoples the very qualified nature of the “triumph” which they had been led for thirty years to count upon as a certainty.

It is plainly unnecessary to point out the inevitable effect of such interpretation. It means that more than ever all



Germans will be taught to regard England as the enemy, not, be it observed as before, as one of a number of enemies, but as one special enemy to whose destruction the efforts of patriotic Germans should be devoted, to the exclusion of all other consideration. The rulers of Prussia will encourage this mood, not only because it helps to save their credit but also because they will rightly think it the safest direction to give to popular ambitions. Everything else will be sacrificed to the single purpose of building a Navy powerful enough to wrest from us our predominance on the seas.

If that effort should succeed—and I shall deal with its chance of success in another section—it needs no insistence that the event spells for this country not merely defeat but annihilation.

## II

### THE FATE OF ENGLAND

It being clear for the reason set out in the last section that Prussia, if she succeeds in obtaining any sort of respite, will use it for the purpose of preparing for an overwhelming and, as it is hoped, decisive attack upon Great Britain, it remains to see how this country will stand in the face of such a threat to her security and indeed to her existence.

To this end the international situation, which would be created by a premature peace, must first be considered.

I am assuming throughout—and the assumption is obviously a legitimate one—that any peace that is made will be made by the common consent of all the Allies. None can suppose that either this country or any other concerned would

break faith or tear up the "scrap of paper" which has been so solemnly signed and ratified. Nevertheless, when nations are engaged in prosecuting a common cause, the influence of one nation will often determine the course of the others. If one party to an alliance appears to be hanging back or showing a disposition to consider terms of peace, its example will powerfully influence the calculations and therefore the action of others. Its disposition may not prevail, but it will have weight.

Let us suppose—*absit omen*—that the rulers of this country were somewhat inclined to favour a settlement on terms short of the complete overthrow of the Prussian Empire. I feel pretty sure that France would not consent. I do not think that Russia would. And I do not suggest for a moment that any Englishman—even a politician—would withdraw while his Allies were holding out. Still if Great Britain—or those who professed to speak for Great Britain—were of that mind, it would encourage such elements in the other countries as might incline to the

same view and weaken the contrary elements. Eventually it is just conceivable that such a view might prevail, especially since it must be admitted that no other country is quite so directly menaced by a peace which would leave Prussia still capable of aggressive action as is this country of ours.

Supposing such a peace to be concluded, what would be the subsequent relations between Great Britain and those Powers which had been her Allies? Here, I think, one has to take account of certain facts of national psychology to which all history bears witness. Of these none is more certain than nations which have, at the end of a long war, fully accomplished their purpose, tend to trust and admire each other, while, if the war closes with that purpose not fully accomplished, amid disappointed hopes and secret fears for the future, they tend to distrust and re-criminate upon each other. After all, it is only natural. Each Government must needs offer to its own patriotic nationals some explanation of its partial failure, and both Government and people would be



more than human if they had no tendency to seek a scapegoat in the foreigner. If the close of this war leaves the Prussian menace undestroyed it will almost certainly be said in England that it might have been destroyed if France had been better prepared; in France that it might have been destroyed if England had made greater sacrifices; in Russia that it might have been destroyed if the Western Powers had moved more promptly, and so on. All these charges would be utterly false, and no whisper of them would ever be heard if the war ended in a complete and satisfying victory. In that case France would be thought of by her Allies only in association with the brilliant strategy of the Marne and the thrilling defence of Verdun; England only in association with the invaluable service rendered in the keeping of the seas and the unparalleled effort by which virtually her whole manhood was suddenly called up in defence of the liberties of Europe; Russia only in association with the chivalrous dash into East Prussia, and the amazing tenacity under almost unbearable pressure which marked the

great and successful retreat of 1915. No serious divergencies appear among the special objects of the Allies, such as under less happy circumstances might endanger their union in the moment of triumph. But it is of the nature of defeat, and it cannot be too often repeated that a solution which left the military power of Prussia in being would be nothing less than a defeat—to breed such quarrels.

And this peril would, of course, be enormously intensified if it appeared that the influence of Great Britain had been thrown into the scale against the annihilation of the German Empire. In that case we should have to face not merely a certain temper of doubt and luke-warmness on the part of our Allies, but almost certainly a definite coalition against us.

Now taking it as certain for reasons already given, that if we leave the enemy still capable of renewed action in the future, we shall inevitably have to meet another attack upon our own liberties in a few years' time, and shall probably have to meet that attack single-handed, there remains the question of how far we can be

in a position to defeat it if to-day we permit an inconclusive peace.

In order that Prussia may prepare for an attack upon this country she needs to do one thing, and one thing only, and that is to build and equip a navy strong enough to overpower our own. When once that has been accomplished we are at her mercy, for not only is it true that even if we put every available man under arms we have not reserves of men—power equal to those of the German and Austrian Empires, even if the latter be shorn of some of their provinces, but it is also true—it is indeed a commonplace—that if our fleet were defeated, an enemy could destroy our power of resistance without firing another shot, by simply cutting off our supplies of food and material.

So much even the shallowest believer in some sort of permanent and mystical security attaching to these islands will admit. But to many who have been misled by the facile rhetoric of national self-glorification until their observations are perilously remote from reality, it will and does seem impossible that any rival nation

can obtain such a superiority over us at sea.

It is not in the smallest degree impossible. Naval supremacy is ultimately a matter of shipbuilding, and shipbuilding is ultimately a matter of expenditure. No doubt other factors enter into the matter. Experience counts for something; national tradition counts for something; inherited skill in matters such as seamanship and gunnery counts for something; the national character, which in our case has always been known as peculiarly apt for sea as it has been found also to be for air work, counts for a good deal. But a statesman would deserve impeachment who counted on such incalculable things to save him, if in all calculable things the enemy were demonstrably superior. Moreover, at the best, such advantages can only outweigh superiority in material within a very narrow margin. Nobody can suppose that the most unmistakable difference in seamanship or gunfire or command conceivable as between two great European Powers could enable one fleet to meet such another three or four times



its size. Yet, if once it be allowed that the Germans can outbuild us, it is only a matter of time, of application, and of sacrifice for them to obtain any measure of supremacy that their adventure might require.

But can the Germans outbuild us? As it seems to me, if they devote all their energies and resources to that one effort they almost certainly can. Prussia has at her absolute disposal all the material wealth within the confines of the German Empire. To this must in all probability be added the resources of such territories as still remain subject to the Austrian Crown, which is bound, after an uncertain peace, to become more than ever the vassal of Prussia, even if the German-speaking areas do not in the near future fall, as is exceedingly likely, directly under Prussian rule. Now the actual material wealth—I mean the value of purchasable commodities—within the German Empire is certainly far greater than that of the United Kingdom. And I shall show presently that the kind of wealth upon which we have counted as making

up our national prosperity is likely to fail us altogether in such a contingency as I am outlining.

Besides her material wealth, Prussia has the advantage of ruling the most docile population to be found on the face of the earth. The Germans are the last people in the world to offer serious resistance—I mean the violent resistance that counts—to any burden that may be put upon them in the form of huge taxation. Everything that the ordinary German—I exclude certain wealthy and influential classes which are likely to be largely spared—has can be taken from him by his rulers and exchanged for all that is necessary to the construction of an enormous fleet, and he will not resist, he will hardly complain. In this particular case he is the less likely to do so since he will be told and will believe that the Empire of the world was within his grasp, and had actually been achieved by Germans when the fruits of so astonishing a triumph were snatched from him, solely because he had allowed Great Britain to retain her preponderance at sea.

The Germans will, in all probability, have another advantage which they have hitherto lacked. Their continental ambitions will have suffered defeat, and their continental neighbours and rivals will feel pretty secure for some time at any rate against any renewal of Prussian aggression in Europe. On the other hand, all the belligerent nations will have lost heavily both in blood and wealth. There will be a very general desire to slow down the pace in the matter of armaments, and it will be to the obvious interest of Prussia to take advantage of this sentiment so far as military armaments are concerned, and to propose, by a general agreement or otherwise, a limitation of the enormous armies which have had to be supported in the past. It will not be in any special way the business of France or Russia to insist on a similar limitation of *naval* armaments, for the building by Prussia of a great fleet seriously menaces only ourselves, and we cannot reasonably expect our present Allies to look after our interests for us if we prove lazy or stupid enough to neglect them. Prussia

is therefore likely enough to be able to save largely on her military expenditure, and devote what she saves to a further increase in the size and efficiency of her navy.

It should be noted that the matter of naval construction is almost wholly mechanical. After what I have already written in these pages I imagine that I am not likely to be suspected of a belief in any astonishing "efficiency," still less in any superhuman cleverness resident in the very dull barbarians of the dreary Baltic plain. I am quite sure that in any matter into which, in a high degree, intelligence entered the North German would be helpless in competition with the Englishman or any other inheritor of European culture. But this matter is one in which—once the elementary lessons have been learnt from more civilised peoples—the fool or the slave can do the actual work as well as another. It depends mainly on labour and expenditure—that is, on industry and material wealth. And whatever industry and material wealth without the direction of broad



judgment or alert intelligence can do, Prussia can do.

Now if this be a fair summary of the assets available to our enemies in such a future competition as I have conceived, what can we reckon in regard to our own capabilities of outdistancing them in the race?

The material wealth at our disposal—and especially that consisting of exchangeable commodities actually within our borders—is and has long been much less great than that of our rival. Such figures as may be quoted as showing that the total income of our nationals is as great or greater are vitiated by the multiplication of “imaginaries” which is involved in our vicious and unequal distribution of property. Moreover, an immense part of the riches which we have been able to count in the past as accruing to us has consisted of foreign investments—that is, of ownership of the means of production in other countries, carrying with it the power of levying tribute on those countries. It is certain that this form of wealth will largely if not wholly

disappear after the war. The huge taxation to which that war has compelled us is being met, and ultimately can only be met by the sale of the bulk of our foreign investments in exchange for the perishable commodities (most of them things like shells which are necessarily destroyed in the act of use) needed for the prosecution of war. And if, as many acute and well-informed authorities on finance believe, the cost of the war and of heavy expenditure in many directions which must inevitably follow the war, is to be met by the floating of a loan in America or elsewhere, the element of tribute must be transferred from the column of assets to that of liabilities. If it be said that our financial position will be better than that of our enemies, whom the war must necessarily reduce to actual bankruptcy, it may be answered that, while this is certainly true, it is also true that the mobilisable wealth of the Germanic Empires depends to a far less degree than ours upon actual products exchangeable in the market.

It would seem, therefore, that if both Great Britain and the Germanic Powers,

or even Great Britain and the German Empire alone, taxed themselves to the last farthing to build a supreme navy, the enemy could outbuild us. But there is a moral factor which enforces this conclusion even more convincingly.

The people of these islands have shown thoroughly enough that they are prepared to shrink from no sacrifice demanded of them, if such sacrifice is known to be necessary to the preservation of their country. But they are by no means German in their submissiveness, and if to the enormous burdens entailed by this war is to be added the burden of an unprecedented and steadily rising increase in naval expenditure (to say nothing of military expenditure) to follow the war, they will certainly want to be assured that such expenditure is urgently required in the vital interests of the nation.

Now the politicians who have made an inconclusive peace—supposing such a disaster to be contemplated—can hardly stultify themselves by going to their constituents next day and telling them that that peace has placed them in such peril

that immediate and unparalleled preparations for another war are essential. To save their wretched faces, such men will have, for a time at least, to assure the nation that the peace may be regarded as permanent, and that the country is for the moment safe. From what we know of politicians we may take it as certain that they will do so. The old game will be played over again, but under a menace far more terrible, with consequences far more disastrous. We shall be assured that the Germans are as tired of war as we are, and that they have no intention of again attacking us, while Prussia is putting every spare penny into shipbuilding. She will get the lead and keep it until either the politicians are frightened into telling the truth or the people discover it in spite of them. In either case the revelation will probably come too late.

One further thing must be observed in this connection. After this war we shall in any case be confronted with economic and industrial problems of the gravest kind—serious financial exhaustion accompanied with the need of providing for



millions of men to whom their country owes a debt which must in honour be regarded as a first charge upon the wealth of the nation. Beyond this, we shall be faced with the virtual collapse of our old social order, and the sharp alternative of building a new and stable order in its place, under which sufficiency, security, and freedom shall belong to the mass of families composing the State or taking the other and easier alternative of reducing that mass to a condition of quasi-slavery. On the choice we make the whole future of our country depends.

Now unless this war ends in the complete destruction of the Prussian menace all these mighty issues must be left to solve themselves—that is, to drift towards the worst and most humiliating solution. The great opportunity (accompanied by great perils) which the war has created of building a juster and happier society will be lost for ever because we shall have neither the time nor the resources required to avail ourselves of it. If the war ends inconclusively no patriot will dare to think of anything else than the immediate

peril hanging over England. Everything will have to give way to the piling up of such armaments as may just avert—and that narrowly—the subjugation of our country. Conscription in the strictest form will have to be universally enforced. The iron discipline of war will have to be continued in peace. And all the time the very same rich men whose fear and greed have been largely instrumental in bringing about so shameful and disastrous a surrender to the foreigner will take advantage of the very peril they themselves have created, and pursue without check or hindrance their settled policy of enslaving their poorer fellow-countrymen.

That is perhaps the last and worst consequence to be apprehended from a peace without security or honour.

### III

#### THE UNPUNISHED CRIMINAL

THOSE of us who believe that the fundamental fact of existence consists of something other than blind and mindless material forces, that—as the old phrase went, “there is a Judge that judgeth the earth”—will find great difficulty in believing that men can obtain a stable peace based upon anything but justice. And the first condition of justice is the punishment of crime. A peace which left the criminal unpunished would be not merely a direct incitement to crime—though that among other things it would assuredly be. It would be a thing to be condemned by standards older and higher than those of utilitarianism. It would be an affront to Divine Justice.

That is one way of looking at the thing

—the way native to Christendom. But let us look at it from the other standpoint—that of modern thought, that is to say, of the denial of right. Let us look at the matter practically and ask what would be among the natural consequences of leaving Prussia no worse off—or at least no more worse off than its victims—for the crime which she attempted and so nearly achieved.

There are a great many people, including many for whom I have a sincere respect, who hope that among the consequences of this war will be the establishment of some permanent guarantee of peace between European nations. I do not say that I share that hope, or at any rate that expectation. As a fact, I do not. But I recognise that many persons, whose motives and judgment I admire, entertain it, and as these are very largely the same sort of people to whom the hope of an early (which almost necessarily means an inconclusive) peace makes a certain appeal, I think that it may be worth while to point out that the two hopes are strictly and absolutely incompatible.



Those who desire the elimination of war and who believe such an elimination to be possible, must necessarily have something to offer as an alternative to war when two nations are at issue on some point of policy which neither feels disposed to surrender. The alternative most commonly offered is a reference of the dispute to arbitration by some neutral tribunal. An obvious—though in my private opinion a fallacious—analogy is continually offered in this connection. Private war, the settlement of differences of individual citizens by personal combat, has, it is often pointed out, been virtually barred in all nations which have reached a certain standard of ordered civilisation. The duel indeed still exists in most of such nations to offer a partial contradiction to this argument; but as against this it may be urged, firstly that the duel as a mode of redress is not universal, and secondly that where it is in use it is employed mainly if not entirely for the redress of such wrongs as the law cannot or does not punish. Where the law is available to protect the citizen, it is increasingly conceived to be the duty of a

civilised man to appeal to it. And it is argued that the application of the same principle to nations would lead to a similar elimination of international violence.

I will not here set out the reasons which make me think this analogy false. I will rather assume it, for the sake of argument, to be true, and proceed to deduce some of its more obvious consequences.

The reason why private violence has been eliminated—in so far as it has been eliminated—is not merely that State tribunals have been established, but that the decisions of such tribunals can be imposed on the recalcitrant by the armed force at the disposal of the State. If these decisions were not thus enforceable they would be of no use at all except in those cases where both sides were prepared to obey them voluntarily; and as these will obviously be the very cases in which the disputants would, even if there were no tribunal, be disposed to compromise rather than fight, the value of such a tribunal as a preventative against violence would be practically *nil*. On the other hand, even without any elaborate apparatus of law,

some kind of order can be kept in a primitive community—as, for instance, in a new colony hardly settled—if the actual citizens are ready to enforce some kind of rough-and-ready justice, and to punish the transgressor as horse-thieves and the like were punished in the “back-blocks” of America in pioneer times.

Exactly the same thing is true of international relations. Such a tribunal as we have established at the Hague may serve quite a useful purpose in settling small disputes which are not really worth fighting about, but which, if left open, may become dangerous—the exact definition of a doubtful frontier, or the interpretation of some minor clause in a treaty. But it is clearly valueless in relation to quarrels which involve vital national interests, unless it is armed with the material powers required to impose its decisions, by force if necessary, on the unwilling party. And the converse, already noted in the case of private violence or fraud, is also true. Some sort of order can be kept between nations even without an authorised tribunal, if those nations

are ready to act together against any one of their number which deliberately disregards its contracts or makes an unprovoked attack upon its neighbours.

Such action must necessarily carry with it the further idea of the *punishment* of the guilty party. If the police merely prevented a burglar from committing his crime, and, having caught him in the act of attempting it, let him go, empty-handed indeed, but free and unpenalised and in a position to repeat his offence, we should all feel not only that the ends of justice had been defeated, but that crime had been definitely encouraged. The burglar would feel, and rightly feel, that from the commercial standpoint his experiment was justified. He might have got a diamond necklace; the chance was well worth taking even at a moderate risk. But if there is to be no risk, if he is not to balance the chance of getting a diamond necklace against the chance of getting two years in gaol, but merely the chance of getting a diamond necklace against the chance of failing to get it—remaining otherwise exactly where he is—it cannot be denied



that from the worldly point of view he is a fool not to take it. Still more would this be so if the burglar were offered any inducement to surrender the diamond necklace—if “negotiations” were entered into with him on the subject. In that case he would simply be being paid by the State for being a burglar.

Yet just that and nothing else is the meaning of talk about ending this war by “negotiations” with the enemy. Negotiation means offering something. If Prussia is “negotiated” out of Belgium, as some suggest, it will mean one thing, and one thing only. It will mean that she is being rewarded for attacking Belgium.

Therefore I say to those who desire the establishment of permanent tribunals of arbitration such as they think may render war unnecessary in the future, that they stultify themselves unless they take the present unique opportunity of proving that the common conscience of Europe is capable of organising the defence of clear international law and the punishment of those who openly and cynically violate it.

If the case of Europe against the Germanic Powers cannot be enforced, what case ever can be enforced? What declaration or treaty can the Great Powers sign which shall be more specific and binding than the declaration by which Prussia bound herself to respect the neutrality of Belgium? What tribunal can they set up more authoritative than the Hague Tribunal to which Serbia appealed, or the Conference of Powers for which Sir Edward Grey asked? Both the appeal and the request were refused by the Germanic Powers, and that on the specific ground—advanced by the Prussian Government in so many words—that Austria being a great power could not be expected to accept any sort of arbitration or mediation in dealing with a small one. If that plea is accepted there is an end of all thought of the substitution of arbitration for war; the enforcement of universal peace under such conditions would merely mean an express permission to the strong to bully the weak with impunity. And if the war ends without the exemplary punishment of the guilty parties, that plea is accepted.

Whatever incidental sacrifice the Germanic Powers may be asked to make, they will in effect have carried their point. And in future the privilege of any big military power to attack a small neighbour without provocation, and to refuse all intervention, however friendly, on the part of the Powers will have been conceded.

Furthermore, in speaking only of the original offence of Prussia—for of course Prussia is the head and fount of the offending—in her violation of international right, I am altogether understating the case. From that original crime there has proceeded a long series of successive and individual crimes, every one of which must be punished both on the score of justice and on that of expediency. The peasantry of whole provinces of occupied territory have been deliberately massacred for no other purpose than that of terror. Women have been violated, not in consequence of lax discipline or sudden explosion of passion, but under regular military orders. Children have been killed and tortured. Churches, cathedrals, public monuments

have been destroyed from mere perversion of spite. Non-combatants have been deliberately slaughtered by land and sea. An Englishwoman who had been tending the German wounded has been foully murdered. Our very prisoners-of-war have been deliberately starved, beaten, and crowded of set purpose in centres of filth and disease.

All this is not merely a question of sentiment. If the methods adopted by Prussia and her vassals throughout this war go unpunished, they become precedents; even Powers with decent traditions of humanity will have in mere self-defence to go as near as their instincts will permit to the Prussian standard instead of keeping as far as possible away from it. All that the long Christian centuries have done in the way of humanising war, mitigating its horrors, and preserving its chivalry and honour will be undone and reversed if those who are responsible for introducing into it a vileness unknown among the worst savages of the past are not made to suffer for their transgressions. And as it is obvious that such men will



never be handed over for punishment as a condition of any peace not imposed on a people no longer capable of resistance, the refusal of all terms until such conditions obtained becomes not less necessary to any hope of diminishing the evils of war than to that of preventing its recurrence.

Thus stands the case for the adequate punishment of Prussia and of her rulers as a condition of peace, as it may be stated on purely utilitarian grounds, and on principles acknowledged and even specially emphasised by those who, in general, lean towards Pacifist materialism in their theory of morals. So far as it goes it is conclusive. But I would not be so hypocritical as to pretend that it is the full case as it appeals to me—or as I fancy it appeals to most of my fellow-countrymen. When I read of the Wittenberg horrors—the climax so far as we are concerned of Prussian infamy—I own that I entertained the hope that I should never again hear an Englishman speak of peace, at least until we had the enemy beaten to his knees. There is one particular episode in that hideous story which I would

like to see written up in large letters on every hoarding and taught to the children in every Board School. It is that of the German doctor—by name Aschenbach—approaching the hell to which our men were condemned, standing afar off protected by mask and gloves and other precautions for his personal safety, and calling the brave soldiers among whom he and his like had deliberately spread a filthy plague “English swine.”

There are only two alternative courses to be pursued in regard to those words. One is to note them, to remember them, and, please God, in due time to take full vengeance for them. The other is to deserve them.

## IV

### AFTER THE WAR

THE essential thing about the settlement which is to follow this war is that it should not be negotiated as between equals, but imposed by the victors on the vanquished. Compared with the importance of that condition the question of the actual terms so to be imposed becomes one of comparative insignificance. A Prussia utterly broken and humiliated, incapable of further resistance, and compelled to beg from those she has wronged such contemptuous mercy as they may see fit to grant her—that is the one thing needful. The arrangement of other matters, though not altogether a simple affair, is one which it ought not to be difficult to effect when once military victory is complete and secure.

It may, however, be worth while to devote a short space to the provisions which the Allies must undoubtedly take against the possibility of Prussia's recovery. Broadly speaking there are two methods of affecting this end which suggest themselves. They are not, strictly speaking, alternatives, for they can be, to a considerable extent, combined. But those who agree that the elimination of the German Empire as a formidable military power from the constitution of Europe is essential to a stable peace, are to some extent divided according as they lean to the one or to the other. The two methods are disarmament (with some sort of guarantee against re-armament) and partition.

I suppose that we all agree that Prussia must disgorge her stolen goods—or at least those that have been stolen within comparatively recent times. Alsace and Lorraine must be given back to France, and the Polish provinces must form part of a reconstructed Poland under Russian hegemony. This country must presumably regain Heligoland, and, of course,



retain the German Colonies, while, securing either the demolition of the Kiel Canal or its transfer to the small and pacific State of Denmark which might thus recover *her* stolen provinces. The German Navy must be either sunk or divided among the Allies. Similarly Austria must lose her share of Poland, Bohemia must be constituted an independent Slav State, Bosnia and Herzegovina must go to Serbia, and Slavonia, Croatia and the other Southern Slav provinces of the Hapsburg Empire must either share the same fortune (though here the difference of religion makes a difficulty) or become independent. Italy will, of course, get the Trentino, Trieste, and probably a part of Dalmatia.

So far the matter is easy, once the fighting is over. But shall we carry dismemberment any further? Shall we attempt any kind of partition of the true Germanies? Or shall we destroy the bond which unites them, and break them up once more into a collection of small commonwealths? Shall we isolate Prussia from the other German States? Shall we dethrone the Hohenzollerns?

As regards the last point, I may say at once that while such dethronement would be well deserved, and would help to satisfy the moral sense of mankind, I do not believe that its practical effect would be very great. I have heard German Socialists speak long before the war, and I have watched carefully their activities since its outbreak, and I have already given my conclusion—that a German Republic with its headquarters in Berlin and with a Cabinet drawn exclusively from the Socialist Party would have exactly the same sort of morals, and would be just as much of a nuisance and a menace to the rights of its neighbours as the present German Empire. The time has long gone by when Prussianism was the mere inheritance of a dynasty. It has become the religion of a people.

As regards partition—carried beyond the points already noted—there is one objection to it, and one only, and that is that none of the Allies really want it. It is true that the Germans have no more right to complain of annexation as a violation of their nationality than has a garotter

to complain of imprisonment as a violation of his individual liberty. It is also true that the Germans have never been converted to reasonably civilised habits except by conquest, and that the same docility and absence of indigenous culture which makes them to-day follow Prussia in so servile a fashion, would make them in a very short time amenable to more worthy leadership. The typical case of Alsace has proved this conclusively. But after this war all the European Powers will be pretty thoroughly exhausted, and will have quite enough work in hand in rebuilding their own social and economic systems without undertaking the forcible education of great masses of barbarians.

In consequence we find some, whose judgment I greatly respect, who are as convinced as I am that peace must not be concluded on any terms which leave Prussia capable of further effort or mischief, but who think, nevertheless, that the best course to take will be to force a disarmed Germany to sign a treaty forbidding her ever to rearm in any fashion whatsoever, saddle her with a crushing

indemnity enforced as in 1871, by the occupation of certain parts of her territory until it shall be paid, and then leave the Germans severely alone to divide or unite as they choose, and even to retain Prussian leadership if, after the crushing military defeat and humiliation of Prussia, such leadership is still sought by them—the only condition being that the first breach of the treaty which forbids them to keep up any armed force either on land or sea shall be the signal for a renewed attack. The Germanies under such a system would become something like the Indian reserves in America—oases of tolerated barbarism, harmless to civilisation, because kept permanently without power of aggression or resistance.

Personally, though such a solution might be tolerable as a temporary arrangement while the rest of Europe was recovering from the wounds inflicted by this war, I cannot think that it could be satisfactory as a permanent solution. It would involve the shirking of our ultimate duty which is, after all, to make Europe one in tradition and law, and it would also, I think,



be not a little dangerous, for no one can guarantee that the European Powers will never again quarrel, or that advantage will not be taken of such quarrels by the Germans to get rid of the humiliating position to which they find themselves compelled.

Ultimately, whatever immediate arrangements are made, I think that Europe will have to deal with the barbarism of the Germanies in some more decisive fashion.

As regards my own suggestions towards such a solution, I do not think I can do better than reproduce part of an article I wrote in the *New Witness* in reply to a challenge from Mr March Phillipps some months ago. These suggestions are only tentative, but I find little to add and nothing particular to modify in their terms :—

“Tentatively, I would suggest something like this as a practical arrangement. France (or France and Belgium between them) might be given not only Alsace-Lorraine, but the whole left bank of the Rhine as far as the Dutch frontier. It would take the French, with their extra-

ordinary national genius for Government and persuasion, very little time to absorb the inhabitants. In a generation or so they would be as good Frenchmen as the Alsatians. Perhaps we might resurrect the old Kingdom of Hanover under Franco-British protection, and add Westphalia, with its great mineral resources, to it. At any rate, the shadow of the Latin name would thus fall upon all the Western Germanies. At the other end, the reconstituted Kingdom of Poland would, of course, include Posen, and should, I think, also include Silesia, with its large Polish population, the present Empire's other great source of mineral wealth. Whether the Poles would care to undertake the onerous task of civilising the Prussians I cannot say. Probably they will be too busy for the present with the renovation of their own national life. The alternative seems to be to treat Prussia, reduced to her original territory of sand and marsh, as the Americans treated Indian territory—a reserve of barbarism where the Prussians could be allowed to live under Hohenzollern Prince

if they please, but closely watched, forbidden to arm and isolated.

“ But under such an arrangement the South German States remain unaccounted for, and for these I see no natural centre save Vienna. The Germans of the Upper Danube are by comparison a civilised people, and the Hapsburg Crown carries with it a certain historic veneration. The Germans, incapable of corporate initiative, live most naturally when they live by tradition; and the Hapsburg dynasty is probably the only one in Germany enjoying sufficient traditional authority to keep the more barbarous North at bay. Austria must necessarily lose her Slav and Italian provinces, including Bohemia, and (if Roumania should come in on our side) Transylvania. I do not see why she should lose Hungary, unless the Hungarians desire independence; and she might get some measure of compensation for her losses by bringing within her orbit at least the Catholic part of the present German Empire. At any rate, it seems to me that this will be wise statesmanship on the part of the Allies to keep the House

of Hapsburg in being after the war; and this will be even more essential if the obliteration of Prussia should not be so complete as I should desire. For if the war leaves the Prussian Empire in being, even though reduced, while the Austrian Empire is dismembered, Prussia will certainly seek compensation by laying hands, sooner or later, on the German provinces of Austria (she would swallow Mr Shaw's Austrian Republic at a gulp), and might ultimately emerge stronger in resources and more of a menace to European civilisation than ever."

Of course this is all only a suggestion. I put it forward as my own contribution, for what it is worth, to the solution of the problem of the Germanies, which Europe will assuredly have to settle if it is ever to arrive at a stable equilibrium.

. . . . .

And now a final word to the politicians. The whole structure of our political system makes them and keeps them separate and divorced from the popular will. In their ordinary political calculations they make



occasional allowances for the fad of this rich subscriber to the Party funds or the odd scruple of that fellow-politician. They are never accustomed to consult the general will. They do not think it matters; and in ordinary affairs it must be confessed that their judgment is only too near to the truth. The most abominable things can, under our oligarchical system, be enforced on the masses without resistance and almost without protest. Experience has shown that a measure so oppressive as the Insurance Act could be thus imposed on the inarticulate populace that loathed it and knew it to be the beginning of their enslavement, that a scandal so glaring and infamous as the Marconi affair could be condoned.

But there is a limit. The politicians might know this by their own experience. They had done things so degrading to a decent man that it might be thought that there was no point at which they would make a stand. And yet there was such a point. When in August, 1914, they were asked to sell their country, then, in spite of the German money in the secret Party

funds, the better of them, to their honour, refused.

Let them believe that there is a similar breaking point in what seems the unlimited patience of the nation. It will perhaps tolerate anything but treason. It will not tolerate that.

If the politicians determine on a shameful peace, they can no doubt make it. There is in this country no organ of popular initiative. Peace would be made before we heard anything about it. But after we heard about it there would be consequences which the politicians would do well to take into account. And especially would they do well to take into account this fact : that the men whom they will in a very particular manner have betrayed are not the kind of men to whose anger they are accustomed. They will be very numerous. They have already shown themselves ready to face death. And they are already accustomed to the use of arms.

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